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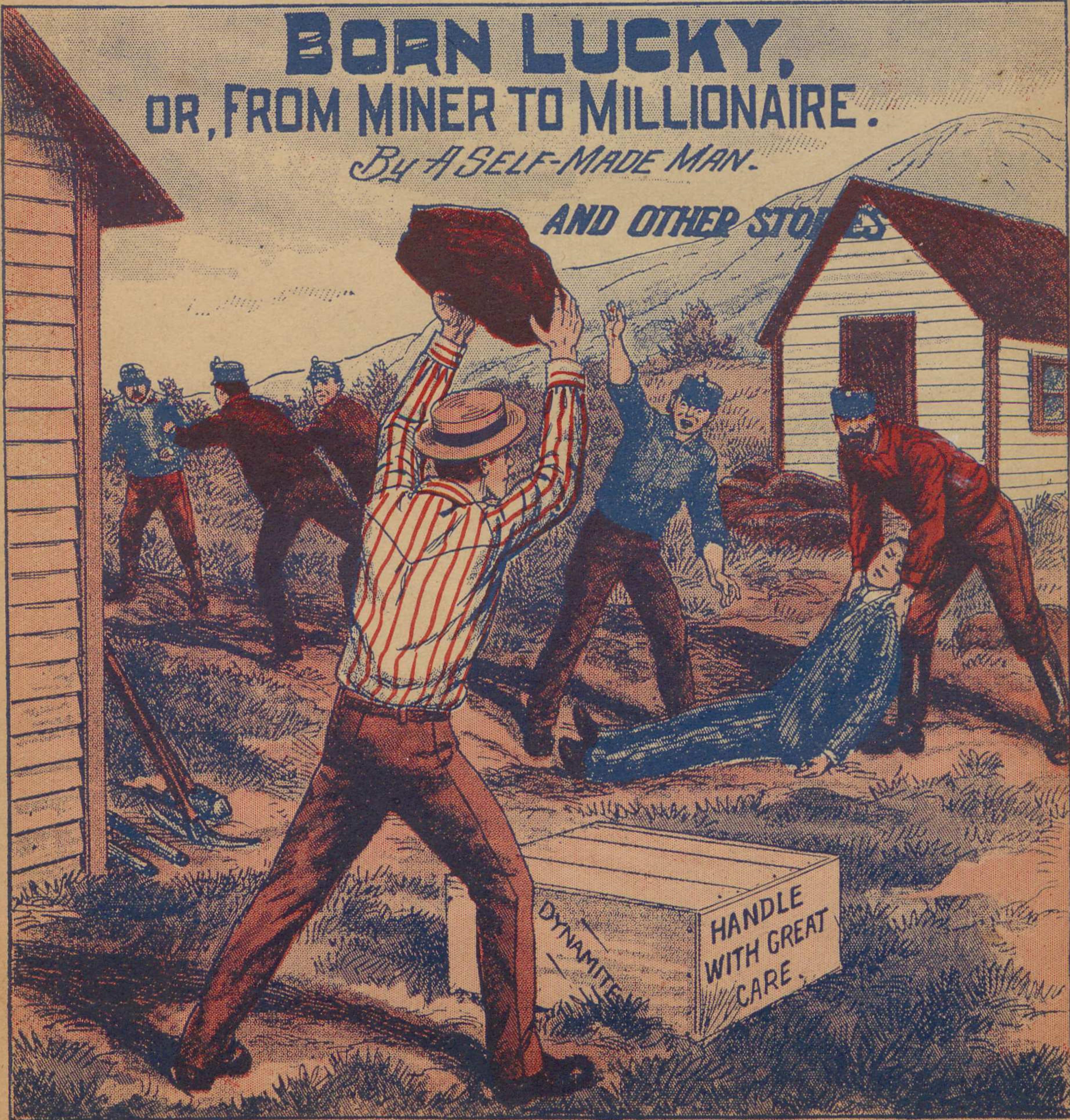
FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY

STORIES OF
BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY.

**BORN LUCKY,
OR, FROM MINER TO MILLIONAIRE.**

By A SELF-MADE MAN.

AND OTHER STORIES



Frank raised the stone over the box of dynamite. "You let that boy be!" he yelled at the miners. "If you hit him again, I will blow you to pieces!" His words alarmed them and they scattered and ran.

FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY

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BORN LUCKY

OR, FROM MINER TO MILLIONAIRE

By A SELF-MADE MAN.

CHAPTER I.—The Boy From the North.

"That is my ultimatum, nephew," said Matthew Crosby, the factory owner, to his only relative, Frank Scott, one morning at the breakfast table. "You will stop your interference at the factory or pack your trunk and leave my house and my employ."

"But, uncle—" protested the fine, manly looking boy who sat opposite.

"I want no buts," replied the elderly man, testily. "I brought you down here to learn the business so that you might rise to become my superintendent and eventually, in the course of human events, succeed to my property. I considered that my duty toward you, for you are the son of my only sister, and my logical heir; but, sir, if you are going to demoralize my factory by injecting philanthropic and socialistic ideas into the business, the sooner you quit the better. I won't have it, and that's all there is about it."

Thus speaking, Mr. Crosby rose from the table and walked to the window overlooking his fine and extensive grounds and the country beyond. The village, largely inhabited by people who worked, though slaved would be the word, in the cotton factory on its suburbs, was in partial evidence through the trees. The factory itself, large as it was, could not be seen. It was situated in a hollow, to begin with, and the rest of its ample proportions, including the chimney, was hidden by a handsome spired church, which stood between the Crosby mansion and the village.

This religious edifice was much superior to its surroundings.

Few country hamlets of the size of Cottonville could boast of such a splendid clerical structure. Mr. Crosby had built it at his own expense, and the act was considered by his better-class neighbors as one of pure and healthy piety, and the reputation he thus acquired had been of great advantage to him in a worldly way. It wasn't piety however, that induced him to erect the building. He couldn't bear to see the "infernal factory," as he called it to himself, from his windows, so he contrived that the church should be placed so as to blot it out, and the steeple to obliterate the great brick chimney.

Mr. Crosby, as may be supposed, was a wealthy man, but his wealth was wrung from the life-

blood of his operatives, children particularly. A great many children worked for him and every one bore the unmistakable stamp of the factory. There seemed to be no lack of children in Cottonville to supply the needs of the Crosby interest, though the cemetery on the slope of a grass-covered hill received a large annual tribute. The standard factory wage was hardly sufficient to keep the adult operatives in food and raiment, therefore the parents set their offspring to work as soon as they were old and strong enough to become useful at the business.

The Crosby factory was a kind of modern Juggernaut. It ground hope, ambition and even life itself out of those attached to it. Yet it was not greatly different from the scores of similar factories in the Sunny South. The conditions of most of these factories, with respect to child industry, was disgraceful, but no concerted effort was made by philanthropists to improve them.

When Frank Scott, at his uncle's invitation, came to Cottonville to enter his relative's service, he had no idea of the state of things in a cotton factory. He was expected to fall into the usual routine and make his way upward, without the personal experience that fell to outsiders.

As the boss' nephew, the tyrannical foremen or overseers did not dare treat him otherwise than with consideration, for all judged that he would eventually become the boss himself. This did not prevent him from making a close observation of the cruelties practiced on the younger operatives, and the hardships of the general rank and file.

Frank had a kind heart, and so much feeling for others that the scenes he was a daily witness of jarred upon him. He soon began to show his sympathy in various ways that won for him the grateful appreciation of the hands, young and old. It also called down on him the criticism and reproofs of the overseers, and finally a respectful call-down from the superintendent.

Frank's little deeds of kindness could not be squelched, and he defended his conduct with so much vigor that the superintendent finally felt constrained to report the matter to Mr. Crosby. The manufacturer gave his nephew a straight-from-the-shoulder calling down.

For a while Frank moderated his acts of goodness, and the superintendent began to have hopes that he would soon grow as calloused to human

sufferings as the conditions called for, when he broke out again, interfering between a foreman and a poor boy named Billy Bunker, who had been reduced to a pitiable wreck through lack of nourishing food and a constant succession of inhuman beatings.

The incident in question occurred on the afternoon previous. Billy, faint from semi-starvation and ceaseless labor, had spoiled a piece of work and the foreman proceeded to knock the daylights out of him, as usual.

Frank happened along at the time, and the boy's cries enlisted his sympathy. He called a halt in the proceedings. The angry foreman forgot himself and struck the Yankee boy with his whip. That was something that Frank could not stand from anybody. In about a minute that foreman was seeing more stars than he had ever studied in the heavens. Frank gave him the beating of his life, and right before all the operatives.

This, of itself, was rank sedition, and was immediately reported to the superintendent, who put on his hat and called on Mr. Crosby. The factory owner was furious, but being obliged to visit a neighboring city that day he was unable to speak his mind to his nephew until the following morning, when our story opens, and by that time a part of his rage had evaporated. Nevertheless, he handled the boy without gloves and wound up as we have seen. Frank defended himself vigorously on humane grounds, but humanity played but a small figure with the factory owner, and he continually cut the lad's words short. Forty years in the factory business had hardened Mr. Crosby's nature, which was not naturally sympathetic, and he had no more feeling for his employees than a rock.

He looked upon them as his own chattel, whom he considered he supported, and he expected them to work as hard as they could. Those who were put over them knew that their positions depended on getting all they could out of the operatives, and they usually made good in that particular. Mr. Crosby drummed on the glass with his fingers as he looked out on the landscape, while Frank put on his hat and started for the factory to begin his day's duties—two hours after the establishment had begun business, but that was a privilege no one else enjoyed, and the superintendent, as well as the foreman, considered him the rankest kind of donkey for risking such a snap in the interests of the human cattle at the looms and elsewhere on the premises.

When Frank got to work he found the foreman of his room in a sweat over the failure of Billy Bunker to turn up. One of the yard hands had been sent to round him up, but the man had not yet returned with his prisoner.

Frank hoped he wouldn't find him. The foreman the boy had whipped scowled at him when they met, but that didn't worry Frank much. He was as independent as all American boys are, and only knuckled down to his uncle because he didn't want to break with him, though from the looks of things he was afraid his stay in Cottonville was going to be short. It was about eleven o'clock and things were humming in the building as usual when a shrill female shriek startled the workroom.

Frank at the time was standing within a few feet of the spot where the big driving belt that

turned all the shafting of the room came up through the floor. A disconnecting rod descended from the ceiling, and without knowing what had happened, but fearing that one of the girls had been caught in the machinery, he sprang forward, seized the rod and threw the driving belt on to the loose pulley. In a moment the main shaft ceased to revolve, which stopped all the small driving pulleys all over the room, and the humming machinery stopped short. Frank then ran where the crowd was gathering and saw that the flowing hair of the prettiest girl in the factory, Bertha Long, had been caught in the belting and she had been drawn up to the shafting, where she hung, pale and terrified, half supported by one hand with which she had mechanically seized a pulley.

Only Frank's prompt action had saved her whole scalp from being torn from her head, and incidentally her life. Frank helped to take the girl down from her dangerous and uncomfortable position, and she was permitted to go into the dressing-room to recover her self-possession. Several of the hands had seen Frank's quick action in stopping the machinery and in a very short time what he had done was known all through the room.

One of the girls told Bertha, and she then realized how much she was indebted to the bright Northern boy, who had already made himself a prime favorite in the factory. When she returned to her machine, Frank went up to her and asked her how she felt.

"A little nervous yet, but I'll be all right soon," she answered, with a smile. "I wish to thank you for saving my life, for I am sure you did by stopping the machinery just in the nick of time."

"You are welcome, Miss Long. It is fortunate I was close to the throw-off at the time," he said.

"You showed great presence of mind at any rate," she said.

"Well, there is nothing like doing the right thing at the right time. If a person could always think quickly in an emergency, instead of getting rattled, much loss of life and property would be avoided."

"I hope you will understand that I am very grateful to you."

"Of course, it's natural you should be. I am glad I was able to do you a service, and I hope you won't suffer any ill effects from it."

Thus speaking, Frank went about his business.

CHAPTER II.—Billy Bunker.

As Frank was on his way to his uncle's mansion after work was over for the day, his attention was attracted by a succession of shouts among the trees near the church, and the sounds of pursuit. He had gone but a few yards when a ragged and wretched-looking boy came running out into the open, hotly followed by three men connected with the factory. Frank recognized the fugitive as Billy Bunker, whom he had befriended the day before.

Billy's face was convulsed with fear and despair, and his limbs appeared to sink under him from weakness. He fell on the ground, with a

moan, and the men were about to pounce on him when Frank interfered.

"Hold on, there! Leave that boy alone!" he cried.

Billy, recognizing the voice, looked up,

"Save me! Save me!" he cried pleadingly.

The men, seeing who had addressed them, drew back and stood sullenly at hand.

"We have orders from the foreman to capture him," one of them said.

"He's a pretty object to make a fuss about, isn't he?" replied Frank, sarcastically. "Look at him. He's half dead from the ill-treatment he's suffered at the hand of that same foreman; and yet you would drag him back to endure more. You chaps ought to be proud of the job you've undertaken to do."

"Orders are orders," growled the man. "We must do as we are told. If we didn't we'd have to get out of Cottonville."

"Well, I want you to understand that I have taken this boy under my protection, so just sheer off and report anything you choose to the foreman."

"I don't see what that boy is to you. You'll get into trouble with your uncle."

"If I do that's my business. This boy looks as if he was on his last legs now, and I won't stand to see him murdered. That's all I've got to say to you men, so you'd better be getting on," said Frank, resolutely.

The men walked off a few paces and then stopped to consult. They expected to get a calling down if they returned without Billy after running him down, yet they didn't feel like having a scrap with the Northern boy because they knew he was not an easy proposition to handle, and also because he was the boss' nephew. They finally decided to wait till Frank went on and then resume their job of getting hold of Billy. So they retired to the shelter of the trees and watched the strangely mated pair in the road.

"You've been away from the factory all day, Billy, and the foreman is madder than blazes over it. Where have you been hiding?"

"In the woods. I'd have stayed there only I got so hungry I came out to try and sneak into the house where Bertha Long lives. She and her mother have always been kind to me, and I sleep most of the time in their attic."

"Then you haven't any home?"

"No. My mother died last winter at the factory gate after my father had been put in jail by order of the superintendent."

"Put in jail! What for?"

"They said he stole a bolt of cotton from the storeroom where he worked, but it was a lie!" flashed the boy. "He never stole it. Somebody else did it and put it on him."

"How came your mother to die so suddenly?" asked Frank, in a sympathetic tone.

"Because when father was sent to prison it broke her heart. She couldn't work like she did before, and they discharged her. I couldn't earn enough to keep us both, and so she got weaker and weaker every day until—" The boy broke down and Frank was much affected by his grief.

"Why does the foreman abuse you so much? I'm sure you do your best. I've watched you and I know you work as hard as you can."

"He's down on me because I persist in saying

that my father didn't steal that cloth. I believe he knows who did steal it, and made something out of it himself."

"Whether he is implicated in that or not he's a brute to abuse you the way I've seen him do."

"He'll kill me when he gets hold of me because you gave him a whipping before the hands on my account."

"If he dares to lay a hand on you I'll give him another and worse one. You can tell him that."

"He'll lick me any way and take the chances. Another lickin' will finish me. I'm nearly dead now."

"You sha'n't have another licking if I can help it. You say you are hungry and want to go to the cottage where Bertha Long lives. I'll go with you and see that you get there. Then stay there till I have a talk with the foreman to-morrow. I'm going to see that you get a square deal after this."

"You're awful good to me, and I won't forget it. I ain't never done nothin' for you, yet you stand up for me. You're different from anybody around here. Those who would help me dare not on account of the foreman. He'd get back at them some way. He's determined to kill me."

"And I'm just as determined that he sha'n't. So cheer up, Billy. Remember, I'm your friend, and I'll knock the block off anybody who ill-treats you after this. Now start ahead for the Long cottage."

Billy led the way through the village to a modest little habitation that was occupied by Bertha Long and her widowed mother. Bertha was helping to prepare supper when they appeared at the door. She was surprised as well as pleased to see Frank.

"Billy wants something to eat and he said you would give it to him," said Frank. "I came here to protect him from being captured by several of the factory men who are after him. I told him to stay here till I squared matters with the foreman."

"I'm glad you brought him. I have been quite anxious about him all day, for I feared he would be found and given another beating. Poor boy! He is not in a condition to stand much more ill-treatment. Will you come in, Mr. Scott? I want to introduce you to my mother. She is anxious to see you and to thank you for saving my life."

"There is no need for her to thank me. You have already done that. However, I'll see your mother since you desire it."

Frank entered the cottage with Billy, and was made acquainted with Mrs. Long. Bertha's mother did thank Frank. She also said that she and her daughter felt it was an honor for him to visit their humble home.

"Nonsense, Mrs. Long. You mustn't think because I'm Mr. Crosby's nephew that I'm any better than you."

"You will own the factory some day and the grand mansion as well," she said.

"Maybe I will and maybe I won't. If I do I won't put on any airs over it," returned Frank.

"If your uncle were more like you things would be different here in this village and at the factory."

"Probably. If I ever get control of the factory there'll be a change. I'm bound to say that I don't like the way the hands are treated. My

uncle has his views, but I have mine, too. He declared this morning that my ideas are revolutionary and destructive of discipline, and he threatened to throw me out if I didn't turn over a new leaf. I'm afraid I never can do as he wants me to, so I suppose my career here will be short."

"I should be sorry to see you go away," said Bertha.

"My uncle is boss around here and his will is law. I can hardly expect to prevail on him to alter the methods he has employed for forty years. I'm sorry that we disagree about many things, because I believe he wants to do the right thing by me. But he hasn't money enough to bribe me to keep my eyes shut to the conditions that exist in the factory. I'd rather run the place at a loss than benefit by the sufferings of others. Now I wish you good evening, and trust you will do all you can for this poor boy."

CHAPTER III.—Frank Gets the Bounce.

Frank and his uncle dined that evening in comparative silence. Mr. Crosby wished to emphasize his displeasure, while the boy was thinking about Bertha Long and Billy Bunker. He could not conceal from himself that he had become very much interested in Bertha since he had talked with her. She seemed more than usually intelligent for a cotton operative, and both she and her mother were decidedly of a higher grade than their neighbors. He had learned that they were only recent accessions to the village—that is, they had come there within the year—and Bertha was not yet an experienced worker. She was undoubtedly a very pretty girl, as nice and refined as she was pretty, and Frank determined to know her better.

Then he began thinking about the unfortunate Billy. He felt sure that if the boy received another beating it would kill him, and he determined to ask his uncle to make some allowances in his behalf. At that juncture the bell rang and the maid came in and told Mr. Crosby that Jim Moss, from the factory, wanted to see him.

Moss was the foreman Frank had whipped, and the boy suspected that his errand concerned him.

"He has probably come here to make trouble for me by telling my uncle that I saved Billy from capture this evening," thought the boy. "He's mean enough to do anything contemptible. No one but a heartless brute would treat Billy the way he does. I'll have it out with him again before long if it costs me my position and my uncle's favor."

Mr. Crosby finished his dinner leisurely and let his visitor wait. When he had no further excuse to stay at the table he went into the library, after directing the servant to show Moss in there. Moss appeared, with his hat in his hand, in a deferential way.

"Well," said the factory magnate, "what is it?"

"I'm sorry, sir, to have to complain about your nephew, but, sir, Billy Bunker didn't appear at the factory all day so I sent a man out to look for him and two more after work stopped. They

discovered him near the church and would have caught him only your nephew came along and ordered them to leave him alone. They didn't feel that they could row with Master Frank, so they drew off and watched him take the boy to the cottage where the Longs live. After he left the cottage they went there and made a demand on the Longs for Billy, but the women refused to give him up. I want to know if we have the right to go there and take him by force."

"Who are these Longs?" asked Mr. Crosby. "Are they connected with the factory?"

"They are newcomers within the last eight months. The daughter is in the loom room, learning to run a machine."

"And her father?"

"She has no father—dead, I suppose."

"The mother isn't a worker, then?"

"No."

"So my nephew prevented your men from securing this Bunker boy?"

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Crosby's brow darkened.

"And the boy is now being protected by those Longs?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do they occupy one of my cottages?"

"They do."

"Then as the magistrate of this village I will give you authority to take him out of the cottage by force, if necessary, but first you must demand that he be given up on my order. I will make it out and sign it for you. As for my nephew—I will attend to him."

Mr. Crosby filled out an order directing the Longs, mother and daughter, to deliver up the person of one Billy Bunker on sight of said order, duly signed by Matthew Crosby, magistrate for the district.

He handed it to the foreman and told him to execute it at once. Outside the partly open window stood Frank Scott, listening to the conversation that was going on inside the library. When Jim Moss rose to go, Frank made a bee-line across the lawn to the road, vaulted the stone fence and started for the Long cottage in the village. After the foreman left the mansion, Mr. Crosby rang for one of the maids and told her to send his nephew to him.

In a few minutes the maid returned and told him that Frank had gone out.

"He'll go out, bag and baggage, for good tomorrow," muttered the factory owner when the door closed behind the maid. "I've warned him, but it seems to do no good. He is determined to have his own way. Very well, he shall have his own way, but not on my property. He has disappointed me and spoiled his own prospects. The fools are evidently not all confined to the lower classes."

He picked up a late magazine and swinging around in his easy chair began to read, with the cheerful assurance that if his operatives were not happy and comfortable after their hard day's toil it was not his fault. In the meantime, Frank arrived at the Long cottage. He was admitted by Bertha, who was surprised but pleased to see him so soon again.

"Where is Billy?" he asked.

"Upstairs in the attic, asleep, poor boy," she replied.

"It is too bad, but you'll have to wake him and hurry him down to me. The foreman has secured an official order from my uncle in his capacity as magistrate, commanding you and your mother to deliver him up. You can't refuse to obey the order without running the risk of arrest and incurring a fine. I have hurried here to get Billy away before the order is presented."

"Where will you take him?"

"There's an old out-house on our property where he never will be looked for. I shall take him there for the night, and in the morning I'll see what can be done for him."

"It's a shame the way the foreman persecutes that lad," said Bertha, indignantly. "It seems a case of personal spite."

"That's what it is, I guess."

Bertha lost no more time, but aroused Billy and brought him downstairs. Frank rushed him away from the cottage just in the nick of time to avoid being seen by Moss and two of his cronies as they approached.

"Where are you takin' me?" Billy asked him, wearily.

"Where you'll be safe for the night, at any rate."

"And where is that, boss?"

"In a shed on Mr. Crosby's property. It's in a little wood, about half a mile from the house. No one will interfere with you, because no one ever goes there."

"All right. Whatever you say goes with me."

"There is plenty of straw for you to make a bed of and early in the morning I'll manage to bring you something to eat. You must stay there all day, and early in the evening I'll give you some money to take you out of the neighborhood. You have got to go, or that rascal Moss will be the death of you."

"I don't know where to go, boss."

"Go to the town of Carlinville, ten miles from here, and maybe you can pick up something to do there. If you can't you must go further."

"I hate to leave Bertha Long. She's been good to me. So has her mother, and so have you, boss. You three are the only friends I count on."

"Well, we can't protect you here any longer. I've done the best I could for you, and my uncle has given me fits about it. If you stayed here and Moss undertook to beat you again I should certainly make it hot for him, and then I would be probably fired out myself."

"I'll go. I don't want you to suffer on my account."

"Some time when you are settled you can write to me or the Longs and let us know where you are and what you are doing. Then we can keep track of you. Don't send a postal card, for it would probably give you away. Put your note in an envelope and seal it carefully. Put a stamp on it and then mail it."

"I'll recollect, boss."

Frank left Billy in the out-house, where he found a ragged blanket hanging on a nail, and returned to the mansion.

"Mr. Crosby wants to see you in the library, sir," said the maid who admitted him.

"Very well, Susan," answered Frank, going directly to the room in question.

"Sit down, young man," said Mr. Crosby, when he entered. "I think I had a plain talk with you this morning about your conduct at the factory.

Instead of improving I find that you're keeping along the old lines. This evening you prevented three of the men sent out by Foreman Moss from taking charge of a boy named Billy Bunker, an apprentice, who stayed away from his work all day. What excuse have you to offer for your uncalled-for interference?"

Frank said he had interfered to save Billy because he knew that Moss meant to thrash him when he got him in his hands.

"It would be little short of murder to whip that boy in the physical shape he is in, and so I deemed it to be my duty to save him," said Frank.

"I have had enough of your interference in the interests of my factory hands. I told you this morning that I wouldn't have any more."

"But surely, uncle, you wouldn't have this lad beaten to death?"

"I never interfere with the disciplinary measures adopted by my people in authority. They are expected to keep order, and the hands down to business. If they fail to do that it is their lookout, and they will lose their positions. Moss is an experienced foreman, and he knows how to handle the workers under him. If he is handicapped by interference he will have just cause for complaint. This is the second time he has been compelled to protest against your conduct. It will be the last, for to-morrow you will leave here and return North, where your philanthropic notions will find a better field to exercise in. At any rate, you won't be allowed to demonstrate your notions down here any longer."

"Do you mean that, uncle?"

"I do, most decidedly. I am through with you. You have thrown away a golden opportunity. That's where you're a fool. You know what I intended to do for you if you turned out satisfactory to me, so don't blame me, but yourself for your foolishness. That's all. You may go to bed, or to packing your trunk, whichever you prefer, but you will leave here in my auto for Carlinville to-morrow afternoon at four, to catch the five o'clock train north."

"All right, uncle, you are the doctor. I have no fault to find with your treatment of me since I have been here, nor do I find fault with you for shipping me. We do not seem to agree on a very important point, so I suppose it is just as well that we part. I am sure I couldn't carry out your views with respect to your operatives. You regard them as so many wheels of your cotton industry, to be worked to the limit of human capacity, and when they give out to cast them aside as you would a crippled machine which has served its purpose as long as it will hold together. On my part, I regard them as heaven's creatures, and recognize that the same red blood that flows in my veins runs in theirs. I know they have feeling and the capacity for suffering, the same as I have. I am not a slave-driver, nor can I learn to be one, so, uncle, it is better that I sever my connections with your interests. My one regret is that I came here, for I shall carry away with me a recollection that will trouble me for many a day. Good night."

Mr. Crosby made no reply. He was intensely angry, and the only thing that prevented an outbreak on his part was the quiet and dignified way in which his nephew had expressed himself. He felt that he would be at a disadvantage if he said

what he wanted to say, so he let his nephew retire in silence.

CHAPTER IV.—Frank and Billy Leave Cottonville.

Frank went to his room and packed up. He preferred to get it over with as he had something else to attend to in the morning. He wanted a chance to say good-by to Bertha Long, whom he felt sorry to part from at a very interesting time, and also to make some arrangements about Billy Bunker. He intended to take Billy with him, not North, but West, where he proposed to go. There was a daily stage between Cottonville and Carlinville. It left the village in the morning, and Frank decided to send Billy on it, with directions to wait for him to turn up near five at the railroad station. He proposed that Billy should meet the stage outside the village so as to prevent any trouble over his departure from Cottonville. Having made his plans for the next day, Frank went to bed.

Next morning he was up early. He entered the kitchen and interviewed the cook. The result was he left the house with a jug of milk and a plate of bread and butter, cold meat and a piece of pie. These he carried to the shed in the wood where Billy was sitting in the early morning sunshine, and the boy made a fine meal. Frank then told him that he was going to leave Cottonville that afternoon for the West.

"What for, boss? You ain't been throw'd out, have you?"

"That's what I have, Billy."

"On my account?"

"Not altogether, but don't you worry about that, I couldn't stay here anyway and not get into hot water over the way things are run at the factory. Now, Billy, I'm going to take you West with me."

"No! Are you?" cried the youth, opening his eyes.

"Yes. I'm going out to the mining districts of Nevada. That's where I was preparing to go when my uncle sent for me to come down here. As I thought a certainty was better than going it blind, I accepted his invitation. Now that the bottom has dropped out of my prospects in this place I'm going back to my original plans. You'll go with me, won't you?"

"Sure I will. I'll go anywhere with you."

"That's settled, then. Here is a five-dollar bill. Put it in your pocket. You're to leave the village by yourself in the morning for Carlinville. You'll reach town about ten. Amuse yourself anyway you chose, but don't fail to be at the railroad station before five and wait for me. I'm going to take the five o'clock train going north, but only as far as Columbus, where we'll stay all night. In the morning we'll take a train West, after I have bought you an outfit of clothes and a suitcase to put your extra stuff in. When you get a bath and put on clean underwear and a new suit of clothes you'll look like a different boy. In fact, if you came right back to Cottonville I'll bet nobody you knew would recognize you," said Frank.

"I ain't done nothing for you that you should spend so much money on me," almost protested Billy.

"Never mind. Maybe you will be able to repay me some day."

"It won't be my fault if I don't, *now*," said Billy, earnestly.

"Well, I must get back to the house. Remember, be sure and meet the stage out of town along the road. I'll tell the driver to look for you and take you up."

"I'll do it."

"And don't fail to meet me at the railroad station at Carlinville a little before five this afternoon."

"I won't fail. You can depend on me."

"Then, good-by till we meet again."

Frank returned to the house and at the regular time breakfasted with his uncle. Mr. Crosby had not passed a very comfortable night. To say the truth, he liked his nephew and was more than half inclined to reverse his decision about sending him away, but his pride prevented him from making the suggestion. He did not like to back down. Then he felt sore at the arraignment of his factory conditions by the boy. If Frank begged his pardon, and asked for another chance he was prepared to give it to him after making such remarks as he thought would let him down easy. Frank, however, made no advances. He was just as pleasant as if nothing had occurred between them to break the relations that had hitherto existed, but he was silent on the factory subject.

Mr. Crosby was on the point of bringing it up once or twice, but he didn't, and so the meal was concluded and the boy went to his room to complete the preparations for his departure. When the operatives left the factory for their dinner, Frank was at the Long cottage waiting for Bertha to come. The girl had wondered why he was not at work that morning. She learned why as soon as she got home.

"I've come to bid you good-by, Miss Long. I'm going to leave the village this afternoon," said Frank.

"Are you really going?" replied the girl, soberly.

"Yes. My uncle had it out with me last night and he decided that I was out of my element here."

"Then you are going back North?" she said, regretfully.

"No, I'm going out West to make my own fortune."

"Going West?"

"Yes, to the mining districts, and I'm going to take Billy Bunker with me."

"Are you, really?"

"I am. I hope to make a man of Billy. When you see him again, as I'm sure you will some day, you won't know him."

"It is very kind of you to take so much interest in the poor boy."

"Not at all. I shall be glad to have a companion on whom I can depend; and Billy is true blue. I trust you won't wholly forget me after I am gone, Miss Long, for I feel that I won't forget you."

"Forget you, Mr. Scott! Did you not save my life? I shall always remember you with gratitude," she said, with some emotion.

"You will probably hear from me before I actually start for the wilds, that is, if you have no objection to me writing to you."

"I shall appreciate any letter you may send me."

"Thank you; then you may be sure I shall

write. You may not be interested in me, but you are in Billy, and I know you will be glad to hear how he is getting on."

"I shall be just as interested in hearing how you are getting along yourself as I will be in Billy."

"I hope you will write to me, letting me know how things are getting on here. I will let you know where to address me. It will probably be Tonopah, Nevada, but I cannot say whether Billy and I will remain long at that camp or not. My intention is to go to a new mining district at Columbia Mountain, where I've read there have been wonderful gold discoveries. It is impossible to say just what we will do till we get on the ground and look around."

Then Frank bade the girl and her mother good-by, and returned to partake of a substantial lunch at his uncle's house.

Mr. Crosby decided to let Frank go North, and then communicate with him after a few weeks, suggesting that he was willing to give him another trial if he would conduct himself along proper lines, and hinting that he had looked into the conditions the boy had complained about and was thinking of making some improvement.

This would be a tremendous concession on the part of the hard-headed factory owner, but the fact was, Frank had aroused his sleeping conscience a little and he began to see certain things in a new light.

Little dreaming of the seed he had sown during his brief stay with his uncle, Frank bade him good-by that afternoon, and with his trunk on end beside the chauffeur, he left Cottonville, as he believed, forever, and started for the railroad.

CHAPTER V.—In Tonopah.

Frank found Billy Bunker waiting for him at the station. He purchased two tickets to Columbus and took his companion into the smoking-car when the train rolled in. In a few minutes they were on their way and the experience was quite new to Billy, who gazed out of the window at the fleeting landscape in great delight. They reached Columbus at nine o'clock, both pretty hungry. Before seeking a restaurant, Frank took his new friend into a furnishing goods store and rigged him out in a new and inexpensive suit, with hat, shoes, shirt, and tie to match. Billy hardly knew himself when he surveyed his person in a tall glass. Frank bought the boy a supply of underclothes and other necessary articles, and a suitcase to put them in. Then they went to a restaurant and had dinner. After that they registered at a moderate-priced hotel.

In the morning Billy had a bath and donned his under apparel.

"I feel like a real gent now, boss," he said, beamingly, to Frank. "If I wasn't so weak on my pins from the hard treatment I've been up against so long I'd feel as gay as a lark."

"You're coming around first-rate, Billy," said Frank. "Day before yesterday you looked like a candidate for an undertaker, but already you are greatly improved. Don't you feel better?"

"Sure I do. It makes me feel good to think that I'm out of Jim Moss' reach. He can't lick me

now. I'm still sore from the last beating he gave me."

"He'll never have the satisfaction of venting his spite on you again," said Frank, encouragingly. "We've both probably seen the last of the rascal."

But that was where he made a mistake. Next morning they took a train for the West. They were bound for the new diggings in southwestern Nevada. Everybody to-day is more or less familiar with the Goldfield and adjacent districts which have made many a poor man rich, and rich men richer. The town of Goldfield to-day is a rushing mining metropolis in a graveyard of dead volcanoes. It has a population of over 10,000, and all modern improvements, including railroad connection, telephones and electric lights. It has three-story stone buildings on its street corners, housing her several banks, and the stores have showy plate glass fronts.

There is also a system of powerful automobile stages, scooting the desert roads like winged monsters to give quick transport to distant out-lying camps, with which it is connected by a network of telephone and telegraph wires.

And all this has happened within a period of less than six years, though the first "rush" to Goldfield took place two years before the town may be said to have had its birth. It was not the Goldfield of to-day that Frank Scott and Billy Bunker were journeying toward. It was the undeveloped Goldfield of 1903 they were making for. The astounding riches of that section of Nevada did not get themselves fully discovered till there had been three successive "rushes" to the region.

What then induced Frank to start for that desert field of action? The following facts which he read in a newspaper just before his uncle wrote and asked him to come to Cottonville, and his boyish enthusiasm pictured the wild region of southwestern Nevada as a new Eldorado, where gold was to be had for the picking.

In the fall of 1902 two Nevada-born young men, familiar with mining and fortified by experience against the dangers of the desert, found themselves "busted" in the mining camp of Tonopah. They had failed to get their hooks into any good thing in that great camp which their limited means would enable them to pull down, and they decided to strike their acquaintances for a grub stake and hit the trail on a prospecting tour.

They started out, and when they reached Columbia Mountain they found it covered with float quartz, some of which—a black-looking rock—they panned and found it exceedingly rich in gold. With plenty of grub and water close at hand they determined to prospect for the ledge from which the rich float came. In a few days they discovered it.

It was twenty feet across a good portion and assayed \$60 per ton in gold. This isn't a circumstance to the finds which have since been made in the Goldfield district, but the young men thought it was well worth staying with. They located nineteen claims, and with the assistance of a few others did the work and perfected the locations on all. Then, in May, 1903, they gave out the news at Tonopah, and the rush was on. Those were facts that attracted Frank's attention to Nevada.

Hundreds went to the new district, staked claims as close as they could get to Columbia Mountain and—returned home; that is, the majority did. The reason was that in those days it cost more than \$60 a ton to mine and ship and smelt the ores of the desert camps, and nothing under that cost could be handled.

Such was the condition of things when Frank and Billy reached Tonopah after a tough and arduous journey from the nearest railroad point. They put up at a rude hotel and Frank began making inquiries about Columbia Mountain right away.

"So you are thinkin' of goin' out thar, are you?" grinned a rough-looking guest when Frank broached the subject to him after supper as they sat in front of the hotel.

"Yes, sir; that's what brought us out here," replied the boy.

"Come from the East, I s'pose?"

"Yes, by way of the South."

"To make yer fortunes, of course," guffawed the man.

"Well, there seems to be fortunes awaiting those who get on the ground."

"Jest so. I've just come from there and I'm clean busted."

"Busted!" ejaculated Frank, gazing at him in astonishment.

"Busted," answered the man, laconically, squirting a jet of tobacco juice into the dirt beyond the boards.

"But there's millions at Columbia Mountain," said Frank.

"Stimler, Marsh and their friends have got it all corralled. Thar ain't nothin' left for outsiders that'll pay to work, though I'll allow the dirt is rich."

A blank look spread over the boy's face. The man's words were not encouraging.

"D'ye see that chap over thar talkin' to the red-headed man?" continued the stranger.

"Yes."

"He, Tom Murphy and a man named Meyers opened up a ledge on the Combination, fourteen feet wide, which averaged \$40 to \$50 per ton in gold."

"He must be doing fine."

"He's busted, like me."

"He is!" exclaimed Frank.

The stranger nodded.

"He got cold feet in spite of the strike."

"Why? I should think he'd have got rich."

"Waal, you're a tenderfoot and don't know nothin' about minin'. It cost more than \$50 a ton to get the ore through the smelter."

"How is that?"

"Waal, Goldfield is out in the desert, and haulin' is expensive. Thar ain't no smelter nigher than this place, so he quit and sold his interest for a song—and the song had as little music to it as that thar burro yonder. He's a stubborn beast, but he's useful."

"Murphy and Meyers, have they sold out, too?"

"Not that I've heard of. They're stickin' it out."

"How much does it cost to get the gold out of a ton of ore?"

"Waal, takin' in consideration the cost of minin', and haulin', it's \$70."

Frank and the stranger talked for some time and the boy learned that in spite of the rose-

colored stories he had read, not a ton of ore had as yet been shipped from Goldfield. He retired early to bed not a little discouraged by what he had learned.

The new Eldorado seemed to have been overestimated. He had come here expecting that both he and Billy would make their fortunes in no time at all, and the first thing he had met was disappointment. A good night's rest put him in a more cheerful frame of mind, and he and Billy went to breakfast with excellent appetites. After the meal Frank buttonholed the landlord and asked him about things at Goldfield, hoping that he would contradict a good deal that the stranger of the evening before had told him. The land'ord told him about the strike made by Stimler and Marsh at Columbia Mountain which, when reported at the camp here, had started the first rush; but he corroborated the stranger's statement that most of the gold-seekers had returned, disappointed with the results they had met with.

"I thought ore that assayed \$50 a ton was good?" said Frank.

"So it is, but if it's going to cost \$50 or more to get it out of the ground and carry it to the smelter, and pay the charges at the latter place, where is the profit?"

"Why don't somebody put up a smelter on the ground?"

"Because there ain't prospect of enough business yet to make one pay. Recollect, these new diggings are out in the desert, and it would cost a pile of money to haul machinery and lumber and other things there."

"My friend and I came here to go to Columbia Mountain, thinking we could make a good thing."

"Why, you're only boys. What could you do except work for some claim owner at day's wages?"

"We thought we mind get hold of a claim and work it."

The landlord stared at the speaker as if he was a kind of freak.

"Know anything about prospecting?"

"No."

"I thought not. Know anything about staking out a claim according to law?"

"No, sir; but I could find that all out here, couldn't I?"

"Yes. I could tell you all about it myself. But what's the use? What would you stake out? Any piece of ground you saw unoccupied, not knowing whether there was an ounce of gold quartz in it or not? Sonny, didn't you have nobody to advise you before you started for this here section?"

"No, sir."

"So I thought. Well, you've come on a fool's errand. I don't see nothing for you to do but go back where you came from. If men who are up in the mining business have come back from the diggings after staking out claims which they have abandoned, where do you expect to come in?"

Frank was silent for a moment or two.

"Did they abandon them because they didn't find gold, or because they didn't find enough to pay them?"

"It amounts to pretty near the same thing."

"Coulda't I buy two of those claims, cheap, for my friend and myself? That would obviate the need of prospecting on our part."

"Then you're set on going out there?"

"Yes. I've put my shoulder to the wheel and I don't care to back out."

"It's 'Pike's Peak or bust' with you, eh? Haw! haw! haw!"

"I intend to make a trial of it. I should have a poor opinion of myself if I gave up without making an effort after coming so far to do it."

"Sonny, I guess you're built of the right stuff if you ain't educated up to the business. Well, you can buy all the claims you want for next to nothing; but I wouldn't advise you to waste the money—no, not a five-dollar note. If you are determined to try your luck go there and look around the diggings. You'll find claims enough on which no location work has been done. The ninety days in which such work must be done to perfect title is about expired. As soon as the time is up the claims lapse and the ground becomes part of the public domain again and open to relocation by anybody."

"Is that so?" said Frank, eagerly. "Could we step in and hold them?"

"Yes, if you did the necessary work within ninety days after you claimed them."

"Then Billy and me will do that."

"Well, I wish you luck, but I'm afraid you'll find that all gold in the ground ain't worth the trouble of mining."

"No matter. We can afford to take the chances of that."

"I'll say one thing, and that is if you boys are stickers, the time may come when your claims will pay. If you only knew how to prospect I'd feel you had some chance, but going it blind you're more likely to take up with worthless ground than good. Still there's such a thing as luck. I believe in it myself. If you're born lucky it would be just like you to go there and strike the richest claim in the district without havin' any more idea of it than a heifer."

"I don't know whether I was born lucky or not."

"Now you stay here a few days and I'll give you all the information you'll need. I'll see that you get the proper kind of outfits, and that you start off in good shape. You must go with a party bound there. A supply train will start on Monday. You can go along with that. If you started off alone you'd lose your way in the desert, and that would be the last of you both."

"All right, sir. I'm much obliged to you for your offer."

"That's all right. I'm glad to help you out. Now go and take a look around these diggings. See how the mines are worked and examine the ore at the different dumps. Ask questions. Nobody will turn you down. Find out all you can, and after dinner I'll have another talk with you."

The landlord walked away to attend to business, leaving the two boys to follow his advice and suggestions.

CHAPTER VI.—Off for Goldfield.

After dinner, true to his word, the landlord took the boys in hand and told them a whole lot about mines and mining.

He explained the way to stake off a claim, gave them the dimensions and all other necessary points. He told Frank that the location work

had to be done according to a certain rule in order to secure a valid title to the claimant, after which they could do as much more work as they chose.

He told them how many claims the two of them could take up, but that the location work must be performed correctly on each claim, within the time limit, to hold it. If after establishing a clear title to as many claims as the law allowed them, they chose to abandon them temporarily, they could do so without fear of losing them in case fresh discoveries in the neighborhood brought on another rush.

He explained that they would be entitled to deeds of the property as soon as they were able to put in a valid claim, and that, at their request, the papers would be filed for record at the county recorder's office. That would prove their unquestioned ownership. Billy was an attentive listener, while Frank absorbed the information generously furnished by the hotel man. He was not able to grasp matters the way Frank did, but he was just as interested. He did not think about making his own fortune, but to help Frank make his.

He intended to work like a beaver for his friend—the boy who had rescued him from the slavery of the cotton factory, and saved him from the savage treatment meted out unsparingly to him by the brute Moss.

During the few days that the boys remained at Tonopah, Frank made use of every opportunity to pick up information about the mining business.

He had funds sufficient to purchase the necessary outfit for himself and his companion, which included a couple of good burros. Their food was to be carried in a kind of double pouch slung across the haunches of the animals at the back of the saddles. For protection they bought a couple of revolvers, with a supply of cartridges.

By Sunday, which was a sort of holiday in Tonopah, they were ready to start out, but as the wagon train wasn't going till the next day they put in the time resting against the hard journey that lay before them. After dinner Frank and Billy started out for a short stroll up the main street of the camp. The miners and other workers who had slept late after a rollicking Saturday night at the saloons, where drinking, smoking and card playing were the chief means of diversion, were now making their appearance in clean shirts and their best apparel, gravitating back to the same saloons to put in the afternoon and evening in the same fashion.

The stage, which arrived the evening before, had brought in several strangers, but none of these had put up at the hotel where the boys stopped, having been captured by the rival house further up the street.

One of these newcomers came out of his hotel just as the boys came abreast of the building.

"Oh, gracious!" gasped Billy, grabbing his companion by the arm.

"What's the matter, Billy?" asked Frank.

"He's here."

"Who's here?"

"The foreman—Jim Moss!"

"Here—you're dreaming."

"Look there!" and Billy pointed at the man, who had not observed them.

Frank looked and he almost gasped himself, for the man whose side face he saw was either Jim Moss or his ghost. It seemed almost ridiculous to think that the foreman of the loom room of Mr. Crosby's cotton factory should be out in Tonopah. He had a steady job in Cottonville, so why should he shake it to come West?

"That man certainly looks enough like Moss to be his twin brother, but I guess it's only a remarkable case of resemblance," said Frank.

"No, it's him," persisted the other lad.

At that moment the man looked directly at them and all doubts as to his real identity were set at rest. He started back with a stare of astonishment and a muttered imprecation. Then he started forward and confronted the boys.

"So you're here, are you, Frank Scott? And you've brought that young imp with you. A pretty companion for you, he is—the son of a convicted thief."

"You're a liar, Jim Moss!" cried Billy, with flashing eyes and flushed face. "My father is no thief, and you know it."

"Why, you young whelp, how dare you talk back to me? I'll—"

"You'll do nothing, Mr. Moss," said Frank, grasping the man's fist as it shot toward his companion. "You're not in Cottonville now, and your authority over Billy Bunker is over for good."

"Oh, it is, eh?" sneered Moss, glaring malevolently at the factory magnate's nephew. "If you know what's good for you you'll keep clear of me, d'ye understand? I lost my job at the factory on account of that imp, and I mean to pay him for it."

"If you try to injure him you'll get into trouble," replied Frank, resolutely.

"You mean you'll butt in, I s'pose?"

"I certainly will. I whipped you once for abusing Billy, and I'm ready to hand it to you again."

"You talk big, young man, but you're not under your uncle's wing now. You're in a place where every man's for himself. What brought you here?"

"What business is that of yours?"

"It ain't none of my business, but I'd like to know."

"Suppose I ask you the same question—what brought you here? You had a job that seemed to suit you. How came you to throw it up?"

"I didn't throw it up. I was discharged on account of that imp. And maybe you had a hand in it, too."

"If you think so, you're wrong."

"Well, I was fired because Crosby said I was responsible for Bunker runnin' away. Just as if he cared anythin' about the kid. I never had no trouble in the factory till you came there and butted into what didn't concern you."

"I don't regret butting in."

"You got the bounce from a soft snap yourself for doin' it," said Moss, with a wicked grin.

"How do you know that I did?"

"The superintendent said so, and I guess the old man told him. At any rate, you left suddenly. Come out here to make your fortune, I s'pose?" with a sneer.

"What we came for needn't worry you."

"It doesn't, but I'm goin' to get square with Bunker before long."

"You must be looking for trouble. I've told you what you may expect if you touch him."

"Look out that I don't do you, as well."

"I'm not afraid of you, Jim Moss."

"You may have cause to alter your mind before you're many days older."

With that veiled threat, Moss turned on his heel and walked away.

"We'll have to look out for him, boss," said Billy.

"We'll do that if he comes to Columbia Mountain. We know that his intentions are unfriendly. He's particularly down on you, but I haven't any doubt that he means to get back at me for the whipping I gave him."

"He's a hard rooster. My father was sent to prison on his word, and I'll bet he stood in with the man who did the stealin' of the cloth. He was always down on my father, and that's the way he got square with him."

"He seems to be bad enough to do just such a rascally trick."

"He's bad enough to do anythin'."

They walked to the end of the street and then back to the hotel, where they spent the rest of the afternoon on the rude veranda, talking to several of the guests. Next morning they were up bright and early, for the wagon train was to start at seven. They appeared at the rendezvous on time and received a friendly greeting from the leader of the train. When everything was ready the wagons started and the leader invited Frank and Billy to ride with him in advance.

CHAPTER VII.—Frank and Billy Locate Several Claims.

There was nothing particularly eventful or exhilarating about the boys' trip across the strip of the great American desert which separated Tonopah from the new diggings that were destined to be a real new Eldorado in a very short time. It was a dreary stretch of rock and sand, in which nothing grew but scrub bushes, which will thrive anywhere.

In due time they came in sight of Columbia Mountain, and there found a small but busy mining camp, its inhabitants going earnestly about their work like men with a well-defined object in view. There were excavations in the crust of the earth on all sides, but not all of these were being worked. Some represented the location work of men who had taken up claims and then abandoned them after securing a legal title to the ground. In other places the work was only partly done, and on some claims none at all had been put through, but the boundary marks remained to show that they had been located.

The real work was practically all going on along the sides of the mountain. Here a certain amount of initial machinery was in operation. Ore was being taken out right along and lay stacked in tiers of bags not far from the mouth of the pit. The ore was raised usually by a small derrick of four upright posts. A wheel, a rope and a bucket completed the hoisting apparatus.

On the principal claim the derrick consisted of two heavily braced uprights, something after the fashion of a squat pile driver. Here the heavy

rope, after going over the wheel at the top, ran into a barn-like structure close by, where it was manipulated by a small hoisting engine with a drum attachment, which wound up or unwound the rope as the bucket was raised and then lowered.

At the foot of the hill was a sort of street, lined on one side only with wooden shacks, the most pretentious of which was a two-story structure of some size which had been erected during the first rush to provide hotel accommodations for the horde of newcomers when their provisions gave out. A rude sign above the door stated that this was the Grandpa House, that being the name the Goldfield district was then known by. Frank carried a letter of introduction from the landlord of the Tonopah Hotel to the proprietor of this hostelry, whose chief business was to provide three meals a day to the miners in the neighborhood. The food that the boys had brought along was merely canned goods and crackers to provide them with sustenance in case they started to work a claim at an inconvenient distance from the hotel.

"Glad to know you, Scott," said "Uncle" Charley Brown, the hotel man, as soon as he had glanced over the letter, "and you, too, Bunker. I'll do all I can for you boys. You're real tenderfoots, so you'll need a helping hand. You've come to the right spot if you expect to make your fortunes."

"Glad to hear that," replied Frank, cheerfully, "but the people at Tonopah gave me a different idea. I met dozens of men there who had been over here, but didn't seem to think that it would pay them to stay."

"The fools don't know a good thing when they see it."

"Well, they claimed that it costs too much to carry the ore from here to the nearest smelter."

"That's right, it does now. But wait till things get to humming here. Why, there's ore been taken out here lately that will assay up to \$150 a ton. You boys want to lose no time in taking up all the claims the law will allow you, for before the month is out such reports will reach Tonopah that will start another rush."

"Is that so?" said Frank. "I guess we made no mistake in coming here."

"Not a bit of it if you're stickers."

"We'll stick till our feet take root."

"That's the way to talk. You go and pick out your claims. If you fancy something that's already been taken up in due form, one of you can go back to Tonopah, find the owners and make a deal with them. I think, however, there won't be no need of that. You ought to find good claims among those on which the regulation time has expired."

"We'll take a look around after dinner."

"Grub will be ready in half an hour, so just sit out there in front and take a look at the country while you're waiting," said the landlord.

"Uncle" Charley introduced the boys to his more important guests when they came in from the works to dinner, and the lads were given a hearty welcome.

"Do you chaps know how to prospect? I suppose you must or you wouldn't come out here," said the owner of one of the claims that was turning out very good ore.

"I'm sorry to say that we do not," replied Frank.

"Then, how do you expect to pick out a promising claim?"

"We'll have to trust to luck."

"Luck is all right in its way, but you need knowledge to back it up."

"We'll have to learn, I suppose, like many others."

"What do you intend to do? Take hold of the abandoned claims which the law allows you to relocate?"

"Yes."

"Know how to do the business and do the location work?"

"Yes, I have a good idea, Jared Cooke, landlord of the Tonopah Hotel, coached us pretty well. He told me that Mr. Brown would help us out if we got stuck."

"Well, I'll help you, too, all I can, though I'm pretty busy with my claim."

"Thank you, sir. It's very kind of you to make the offer."

"You're welcome. We're all hail-fellows-well-met here. Everybody is willing to give a helping hand to a newcomer."

"I'm glad to hear that. We're tenderfoots, you know, and everything in this country is new to us."

"My claims are on the edge of the Stimber & Marsh property. Come over and see how we are working things. Anybody will tell you where to find the Jackson prospect."

"Thank you, I will. We're going out after dinner to take a look around among the claims that are open to relocation. Perhaps you would suggest the best point for us to inspect?"

"I can only give you a general idea, and that won't amount to a lot. I believe that most all the claims that have been located have gold in them, for this district seems to be reeking with it, but one of these days when they have all been opened up a lot of them will hardly be worth their salt."

"Well, I hope we'll strike claims that will pay us for our trouble. It would be rough if, now that we have the pick, we should select some of the worst."

"That's where the lack of practical knowledge of prospecting is likely to spoil your chances."

"But the men who staked the abandoned claims knew something about prospecting, didn't they?"

"The supposition is that they did. But in a rush like we had, less attention is given to prospecting than to the effort to secure claims as close to those that appear to have turned out winners. You see, the nearer you get to a claim that has demonstrated its value the more chance you have to catch on to a good thing yourself. This, however, does not always follow, for the ledges do not extend out in straight lines. You might locate a claim right in the path of a rich lode, and yet find that it ran around your property and turned up on somebody else's claim in a different direction, or in the same direction, hundreds of yards beyond you."

"Then there's as much luck as anything else in it?" said Frank.

"There is a certain amount of luck. Prospectors judge of the presence of gold by the character

of the rock and the general value of the ground by the out-croppings indicating the presence of a ledge near the surface. Such a ledge, when located, may only run a short distance, but may turn up again a quarter of a mile away."

By this time Mr. Jackson had finished his dinner and got up to leave the table. He repeated his invitation to the boys to visit his property and then bade them good-by. Frank had another talk with "Uncle" Charley before they started out, and he gave them some valuable advice. That afternoon they inspected a part of the district close to the claims that were being worked, and Frank picked out the ground he thought promised the best.

At supper he told Mr. Jackson what they had done, and the miner said he guessed they couldn't have done better. Next day they visited the Jackson prospects and also went over to the mines up the mountain side. After that they relocated their own claims and began the location work on one of them. Every day when they got back to the hotel they heard of fresh ore discoveries of a richer character, and the people of the new diggings were more than ever sure that they had struck a real Eldorado.

After they had perfected their title to one claim in good shape they began on another. There was a single claim with two small houses on it which jutted into their property. The location work was done on this ground, but, nevertheless, it had been abandoned, though the title remained with the party who had staked it out.

Frank cast a longing eye on it and wished to get possession of it. Lumber was so expensive that it would save him much money if he could get hold of two ready-built houses cheap. He spoke to Uncle Charley and Mr. Jackson about it, and they advised him to go to Tonopah, look up the owner of the claim and make him an offer for the property.

So Frank returned to the mining town with the first empty train that left Columbia Mountain. He had another desire to get back to Tonopah, and that was to see if there was a letter there for him from Bertha Long. He had written to her soon after he and Billy reached the camp, inclosing a short scrawl put together with some difficulty by his companion, describing their trip from Cottonville to the Far West, and telling her all about Tonopah and its mines.

He had asked her to address him care of Jared Cooke, Tonopah Hotel. He put up at the hotel and was warmly welcomed by Mr. Cooke, the proprietor, who was curious to learn how he and his companion were getting on.

"Did any letter come for me while I was away?" Frank asked.

"Yes. One in a gal's handwriting."

Frank's heart gave a jump, for he knew it must be from Bertha.

The landlord fetched him the letter, which bore the Cottonville postmark. He tore it open and read it with great eagerness. Bertha said she received his letter, with Billy's enclosure, and was delighted to hear from them both. She communicated considerable interesting news, among other things the summary discharge of Jim Moss, which, of course, Frank already knew. She said Mr. Crosby, after a personal inspection of the

factory, had made certain much-needed improvements. He had also curtailed the Saturday hours from five to three and instituted some new regulations that benefited the girls and children.

Frank was both surprised and pleased to hear that. He wondered if it was the result of the plain words he had handed out to his uncle on the night before he left the village. After supper Frank made inquiries for the man who owned the claim he wanted to purchase. After some trouble he found him in one of the saloons. He was now working as a laborer in one of the mines. The boy interviewed him and found the man was willing to sell, but wanted more than he could afford to give.

Finally the owner asked him to make an offer.

"I couldn't give more than half what you ask," said Frank.

The man suggested splitting the difference, but the boy said, "No."

Finally the owner of the property agreed to take Frank's offer.

"Come with me to the Tonopah Hotel, then," said the boy. "Have you got a deed?"

"Yes, it's in my room at the Ball House."

"We'll stop there on the way and you can get it."

The man got his deed and they went to the hotel. Jared Cooke took them both down the street to a lawyer and commissioner of deeds and the transfer was legally made, Frank paying over the money. Next morning, Frank connected with several wagons bound for Columbia Mountain and in due time reached the Goldfield camp, where he found that Billy had been very industrious while he was away.

CHAPTER VIII.—The Box of Dynamite.

A week from the time that Frank made his purchase of the claim the news of the late rich discoveries of gold ore in the Columbia Mountain district aroused fresh excitement at Tonopah, and the second rush for Goldfield set in. Hundreds of men who had joined the first rush in the spring, and staked claims by the score, but failed to do the location work within the ninety days required by law, were thrown into foaming paroxysms at the thought of the millions and millions and trillions of gold that in imagination they had let slip from their grasp. Miners and prospectors began pouring into Goldfield in greater volume than five months before. Uncle Charley Brown's hotel was soon filled to overflowing, and those who could not be accommodated, and they were the big majority, camped out on the claims they hastily staked out as close to the Combination mine and the Jumbo, in both of which claims uncommonly rich ore had recently been struck, as they could get. Frank and Billy were no longer lonesome. They were surrounded by a small army of eager gold hunters. Their claims were about equally distant from both the Combination and the Jumbo, and a little closer to them, though not much, than anything open to the new arrivals. So far they had found very little evidence of gold ore during their preliminary work, but that fact did not discourage Frank.

They were only working near the surface, and

by certain rule, so they did not look for any wonderful developments. Among those who came to the camp was a chap from whom Frank bought the claim which joined their own in the direction of the Jumbo. He was dead sore at having disposed of his property, and wanted to buy it back at an advance, but Frank couldn't see it.

"You took advantage of me, young fellow," he said ungraciously.

"How did I?" asked the boy.

"You knew about the rich find in the Jumbo and the Combination."

"What have those finds got to do with the claim you sold me?"

"A whole lot. The claim is nearer the Jumbo than anything you could stake out."

"Suppose it is, that doesn't make it certain there is rich ore in it."

"Well, I want to buy it back. I'll give you double what you paid me for it."

"No, sir. I wouldn't sell it for four times what I gave for it, nor six times. Do you know what I wanted it for more than anything else?"

"Because it was nearer the Jumbo."

"No; because you put up two shanties on it. They're useful to me."

"If you will sell me back my claim I'll move those shanties on to your other property. How will that suit you?"

"I'd rather have them where they are."

"Sell me a half interest back, then?"

"No, I don't want a partner."

"Ain't that kid, yonder, your pard?"

"Not in the claim. He's got his claims and I have mine, and when we have done the location work on them each of us will take out title separately."

"So you won't sell me back that claim?"

"I don't care to."

The man went off in an ugly mood and Frank didn't see him again for several days, when he saw him talking to Jim Moss, who had taken part in the rush. Frank was sorry to see Moss on the ground. He was afraid it was an omen of trouble for him and Billy. However, the two boys were prepared to meet it if it came, for there was not a drop of cowardly blood in their veins. That day Frank bought a small case of dynamite and had it carried to the claim he had purchased. He intended to lock it up in one of the shanties. When the wagon man delivered it, Frank didn't have the key of either shack with him so he told the man to leave it in front of the door of one of the buildings. Frank then returned to where Billy was working. They put in an hour and then Frank said:

"Billy, run over to my claim and get a stick of dynamite out of the box in front of the yellow shack. We might as well blow this rock up now."

"All right, boss," said Billy, and the lad started off.

Most of the miners in that vicinity had knocked off work for the day, and Frank and Billy intended to quit as soon as they set off the explosive. Frank sat down to await his companion's return. Two minutes went by, however, and Billy didn't turn up.

"I wonder what is keeping him?" said Frank to himself.

At that moment he thought he heard a cry for help in Billy's voice.

"Something is wrong," thought Frank, getting up and starting for the claim on which the buildings stood.

As he came out at the corner of the house where the box of dynamite stood he saw five roughly dressed men standing around Billy, who lay on the ground seemingly unconscious. One of them had a small club in his hand, and it struck Frank he had used it on his companion.

He stopped and looked hard at the men. The man with the club he recognized as Jim Moss. One of the fellows stooped and picked Billy up by the shoulders, as if it was the intention of the bunch to carry the boy off with them. Then it was that Frank saw the chap's face, and he identified him as the man from whom he had bought the claim.

"Those rascals are up to mischief," muttered Frank. "There are five of them and I can't very well tackle them unarmed. I know what I'll do. I'll try to work a bluff on them. They probably won't tumble to the fact that I'll be in as much danger as themselves."

A large stone lay near the box of explosives. It was the sight of it that gave the boy the idea that he intended to spring upon the men, who were so much engaged that they had not observed his approach. Frank raised the stone over the box of dynamite.

"You leave that boy be!" he yelled at the miners. "If you hit him again I will blow you to pieces!"

His words alarmed them and they scattered and ran. As soon as they were at a distance Frank walked over to Billy, who was recovering his senses. The lad had a large swelling on the side of his head from which the blood was trickling, where he had received a blow from the club in the hands of Jim Moss.

"Have those ruffians been laying you out, Billy?" asked Frank.

"It was Jim Moss who downed me," replied Billy, after looking around in a dazed kind of way.

"So I thought," answered Frank, "but the others were at his back."

"Yes. The man who sold you this claim was one of them."

"I know it. I recognized him."

"How did you save me from them?"

Frank explained the success of his dynamite trick.

"What chumps they were to think you meant to carry out your threat!" grinned Billy. "You couldn't have done it without blowing yourself and me up with them."

"I know it, but in the excitement of the moment they didn't think of that."

"That was a pretty hard welt I got. My head is dizzy from it yet."

"How did they happen to catch you?"

"They came on me unawares from behind that building. They were hiding there."

"They must have been up to something, for they could not have expected you to come along."

Frank walked around to the back of the shack. Stuck into a knot-hole was a stick of dynamite.

The rascals had evidently intended to blow up the shanty.

CHAPTER IX.—A Wild Ride for Life.

"They're a nice bunch, I must say," said Frank, when he realized the purpose the fellows had had in view. "I wouldn't be surprised but Moss intended to blow you up with the building after he knocked you out. They were starting to lift you up when I surprised them."

"It would be just like him to do that," said Billy. "It's a good thing for me that you came over here. What brought you?"

"I heard you cry out, and suspecting something was wrong I came to see what was up."

"I guess you saved my life by doing so. We must report this thing to Charley Brown. He's deputy sheriff for this district. He'll round these fellows up if they don't skip out before he gets busy."

"If they leave the camp we'll be well rid of them, but I doubt very much if they'll go very far away. Everybody that comes here now is gold struck."

"They'll leave if Charley Brown gets after them."

"Come now, help me put the case of dynamite into the shed. We'll use this stick to blow up the rock," said Frank.

The dynamite was locked up and then they returned to the other claim where they placed the stick of explosive in position, lighted the fuse and started off for the hotel. They hadn't gone very far when the dynamite shattered the rock, scattering a small cloud of debris around the ground. Frank reported the outrages on Billy to Uncle Charley, when they reached the hotel, telling him who two of the men were and describing the others as well as he could.

"Their purpose was to blow up one of my shacks, possibly both, and it strikes me they intended to include my pard in the wreck."

The hotel man and deputy sheriff was astonished.

"There hasn't been any of that kind of business around here before," he said. "What have those men got against you two?"

"Bud Doble is down on me because I won't sell him back the claim I purchased of him last week."

"Is that so?"

"Yes. As for Jim Moss, he's particularly down on Billy," and Frank explained the long-standing persecution of Billy Bunker in Cottonville by the ex-factory foreman.

"I'll have to get after those rascals," said the hotel man. "We can't have anything like that around here."

After supper the deputy sheriff enlisted the services of a couple of his particular friends and they went out to look for Doble, Moss and their associates. They knew where Doble and Moss hung out, but on arriving at the place they found no signs of them around. Uncle Charley made inquiries for them, but nobody seemed to know where they had gone. After spending several hours looking for the fellows, the hotel man gave the hunt up for the present. As they were not

seen around during the next few days it was believed they had gone back to Tonopah. The rush to Goldfield caused the re-establishment of a stage route, which had been discontinued after the first rush petered out. It made the round trip three times a week, coming into the new gold region loaded to its capacity, and returning with hardly a passenger. The driver was intrusted with the mail bag, which heretofore had been carried by teams at irregular intervals of from three days to a week. The inhabitants of the Columbian Mountain district were now able to get and send mail with some degree of regularity, Uncle Charley Brown acting as temporary postmaster. The second rush had been on for a couple of weeks or so and Goldfield was a humming hive of industry, when Frank found that he needed a fresh supply of canned goods and other provender, as well as sundry things which he could only obtain at Tonopah. His money was pretty well exhausted, but he and Billy had abstracted a number of golden nuggets of small size from the holes they had dug, and these would pass as currency in Tonopah in payment for supplies and anything they wanted.

So one afternoon he took passage by the stage. He was the only passenger and took his seat alongside the driver.

"You seem to be pretty well loaded without passengers," said Frank to the man as they started off.

"Waal, I reckon. This here box under my feet is full of golden nuggets from the Combination, which I'm to deliver at the Tonopah Bank, and I've got a heavy mail strapped on behind, besides several bags of ore bound for the assay office from new claims that have lately been opened up."

"You're carrying mighty valuable freight. Why isn't there a guard along?" asked the boy.

"What for? Thar ain't no danger of a hold-up in the desert."

"Why isn't there? I should think this stage as it stands would offer quite a temptation to men who were hard up, and there are lots of those chaps."

"Naw! I've got a rifle and a revolver, and I reckon you're heeled, too. That's enough pertection, but we don't need it. Nobody is thinkin' of holdin' up anythin' around hear. Everybody is lookin' to make a fortune at Grandpa now by square means, and thar ain't no bandits in this locality, and hain't been since I kin remember."

"I'm glad to hear that. I haven't much to lose myself, but what little it is I couldn't afford to part with it."

"Jest so. Waal, you needn't be afeard that anybody will ride up and call on us to throw up our hands."

A couple of hours later, as the shades of night were descending over the desert, and they were approaching a rather dangerous section of the trail, two men suddenly rode out from behind a ridge of rocks and fell in behind the stage.

"Gosh! we're goin' to have company to camp," said the driver, peering around at the strangers.

The horsemen looked somewhat familiar to Frank, but the gathering dusk prevented him from recognizing their faces. They kept about one hundred yards behind the coach and made

no effort so come nearer. Frank and the driver got out their cold eatables and made a rude meal, and while they were eating the boy told his companion about his experience down South in the cotton factory. He wound up by telling the driver that Jim Moss, the foreman, had come out to the Nevada diggings and explained the ugly trick that rascal, in company with Bud Doble and three other men, had played upon his pard, Billy, and how he had frightened them away with his bluff to explode the box of dynamite. While he was telling the story, darkness descended upon the sandy and rocky desert. As the men on horseback behind seemed to occasion the driver no concern, Frank didn't give them further attention.

The sound of their burros' hoofs were deadened by the sand, and they followed on behind like a pair of ghostly shadows. The driver of the coach slackened up as the vehicle approached the entrance to a defile that ran downward through a mountainous ridge. It was a dangerous run, but he was so accustomed to its windings that he did not mind it at all, even on the darkest night. Nevertheless, he always kept the brake partly on and exercised great vigilance.

As the coach entered the defile the mounted strangers were close behind it. They separated, one riding up on either side of the vehicle. Each had tied a black band, with eye-holes in it, across his face, and each carried a drawn revolver in his hand. When they came abreast of the seat one of them cried:

"Haul in your hosses!"

"What's that?" roared the driver, surprised at seeing the mounted men alongside of the coach, when he supposed they were following behind.

"Stop the coach and throw up your hands!"

By the light of the stars the driver and Frank could see that they were covered by the weapons in the hands of the two men.

"Gosh amighty! D'ye mean to say you're goin' to hold this coach up?" cried the driver.

"Are you goin' to stop or aren't you?" cried the man who was doing the talking. "If you don't haul short up I'll put a ball into your head."

"Throw up your hands, young feller," said the other man, menacing Frank.

Instead of stopping, the driver whirled his whip in the air and brought it down with a sharp swish on the backs of the two forward burros. They sprang forward down the sharp incline, the other two followed and the coach started to roll swiftly away. With an imprecation of anger the man who had threatened to fire pulled the trigger and the ball cut a furrow across the driver's forehead. He fell, without a sound, against Frank. The boy, alive to the exigency of the moment, snatched the reins as they slipped from the unconscious driver's fingers and turned his attention to the burros. He might as well have left them alone, for he had no experience as a driver of a double team, nor could he guide them down the narrow defile, which was barely wide enough for the vehicle to pass over.

The perils of the path were known in a general way to Frank, for he had passed that way twice in the broad daylight and he knew there were a score of places where the swerving of the coach would throw it down into a deep gully or crevice. The coach was gaining momentum every moment, and chasing the hind burros to faster

speed. The vehicle bounced on its heavy springs, but the heavy load of specimen ores inside kept the wheels on the path, fortunately. For the first minute or two, during which several shots were fired by the men who had been left behind by the sudden dash, Frank was all at sea. Then he woke up out of his trance, and pulling the driver's huge bulk over on his side, crossed over and pressed his foot on the brake, a little at the time.

This served to retard the coach a bit and get it under some control. He could do little with the burros, who had made up their minds to run, but he hauled in on the reins and cried, "Whoa!" continually. They didn't recognize his voice as one of authority that they were accustomed to obey, and so kept on at their own sweet will. At this thrilling juncture the moon rose above the ridges and lighted up the defile here and there. Spurs of towering rock threw their gaunt shadows across the dangerous trail. Frank could see the black voids here and there on either side, and occasionally on both sides at once where the path was particularly perilous. Behind he could hear the sharp gallop of the two pursuers on their hardy animals, but the trail was so tortuous that they never were in sight. Frank had to employ one hand holding on to the driver to prevent him from being bounced off to his death, while he held the four reins with the other. He did not dare bear too heavily on the brake for fear of the consequences, and so that awful ride down and through the desert ridge continued in a kind of wild whirlwind, with death staring them in the face on either side, and a rascally pair of enemies close on their heels.

CHAPTER X.—Kicked into Good Fortune.

It was like a terrible nightmare to Frank, that desperate ride, and he never forgot it as long as he lived. Every time the coach lurched toward one of the voids he thought their doom was at hand, and his blood ran cold as he sometimes felt himself hanging over the edge of a crevice, whose depth he could not conceive of. But there is an end of everything, and the bottom of the defile was reached without accident. As the coach swung around the last turn Frank's foot was thrown off the brake and he had to clutch the seat to save himself. Again he fancied their last hour was come when the vehicle, with two wheels off the ground, whirled around a big rock at accelerated speed, then dashed out on level ground and across the silent desert like a meteor express.

"Saved!" muttered the boy to himself.

He would have braked up and stopped the burros now only he knew their pursuers were coming on behind. The moonlight enabled him to see for a considerable distance before and behind and on both sides. It wasn't long before he saw the two rascals dash out into the open and cut after the stage at the best pace their animals were capable of. A stern chase is usually a long one, all things being nearly equal, and so the scoundrels gained but slowly on their prey.

But still they did gain, and when Frank saw that they were overtaking them he gave the four burros the rein and lashed them with the long whip. He couldn't give it the professional crack

the driver was accustomed to impart to it, so its efficiency on the burros was lost. They recognized the crack more than the slight sting when it landed on their hides, and they hustled simply because it was their humor to do so. When they got tired of running they would ease up of their own accord. The dragging of the wheels in the sand soon had that effect on them, and then the pursuers came up, hand over hand, with shouts of satisfaction.

"They're bound to catch us soon," thought Frank, "and being two to one they'll do me up."

As he turned again to note the rapidly decreasing distance between the coach and the scoundrels, the glint of the moonlight on the barrel of the driver's rifle, strapped on the top of the vehicle, caught his eye.

"By George! I forgot about that gun. That will stand those chaps off in great shape," he breathed, excitedly.

Tying the reins to the driver's right arm, he unbuckled the rifle, which was of the magazine pattern, and taking aim at the leading burro behind, across the roof of the coach, he pulled the trigger. A sharp crack and a puff of smoke blew away. Simultaneously the burro fell like a stone in its tracks, pitching its rider over his head. With a fierce imprecation the second rider began blazing away with his revolver, and some of the bullets came unpleasantly close to Frank's head, though he crouched down as well as he could. After expending five shots the rascal reined in and rode back to his companion and Frank reined the burros to their customary pace and then turned his attention to the driver. He pulled a flask of whisky out of the man's pocket and poured some of its contents down his throat. That revived him and he presently sat up and gazed vacantly around.

"What happened?" he asked, in a dazed way.

"Take another drink," said Frank.

The driver did so, and in a few moments pulled himself together.

"Why we're out of the defile," he said. "How did we get down?"

Frank described the fearful trip.

"Young fellow, you're all right," said the man. "You saved us from goin' to perdition by braking up properly. If you hadn't done it, or had put on too much pressure, we'd have gone to kingdom come, sure's you're born."

"I did the best I could, according to my judgment."

"Nobody could have done better so far as results go. Now, what about them chaps? Did they follow us? I don't see them in sight."

"They followed and were catching up when I took a shot at one of the burros with your rifle. I hit him and that put them out of business. They're a mile in the rear by this time, with only one burro between them," replied Frank.

"Hang me, but you're a corker! You've saved the stage, our lives maybe, and all the gold nuggets and stuff I've aboard. You deserve a gold medal."

"I couldn't have done any different, Mr. Burns—"

"Here, my name is Dan! Don't give me any handle. Them things don't go out hyar."

"All right. Whatever you say goes with me."

When they struck one of the desert springs, Dan, who was driving now, reined in and wa-

tered the burros. Then he bathed his wound and bound it up with a bandana handkerchief.

"That chap nearly done for me. A trifle deeper and I'd been a candidate for the cemetery," he said.

"Yes, you had a narrow escape. I wonder who those fellows were? Seems to me the voice of the fellow who spoke seemed familiar to me."

"I haven't any idea who they were," replied Dan. "This is the first time I was ever held up on this route, and I'm blamed glad to say that it didn't work. As soon as I notify the county sheriff he'll take a posse and go after them chaps. As there's a lot of traffic these day across this section of the desert we can't afford to have such goings on. The best way to discourage them is to hang the rascals at the start as an example to others who might be inclined to imitate them."

They rode forward all night, and shortly after sunrise reached Tonopah. Frank dropped off at the hotel, and was the first to circulate the story of the exciting ride down the defile of the ridge and their escape from the two disguised rascals who tried to hold the stage up. Jared Cooke and a crowd of interested miners listened to him. They all declared that he had saved the coach, not only from spoliation by the two rascals, but from wreck in the defile, and praised his nerve under strenuous conditions. In the meantime, Dan Burns, the driver, delivered the mail bag at the post-office and the box of nuggets at the bank.

He also carried the bags of specimens to the assay office. At each of these places he related how Frank Scott had saved the coach and its contents, besides their two lives. The result was that within a couple of hours the bulk of the people of Tonopah had heard about the exciting incident, and Frank found himself something of a hero. The young miner bought the supplies and other things he needed and paid for them in nuggets of gold, although there wasn't a storekeeper in the place but would have given him credit had he wanted it.

On the following day he arranged to have his stuff carried over to Columbia Mountain on a team that was going there, and he rode himself with the driver, who was glad to have his company. The news of his exploit had preceded him, for Dan Burns, when he took the coach back with a load of passengers, told the story to a large audience in the Grandpa House. Tom Murphy, of the Combination claim, whose bank deposit the boy had saved, called on Frank, and after thanking him and praising his conduct, handed him a certificate of 1,000 shares of stock of the company he and his partners had lately formed. The market value of the shares was not much at that time, but later on, when Goldfield was in course of rapid development, it became a very valuable asset. By the time that the ninety days allowed by law had elapsed, Frank and Billy completed the location work in proper shape on their claims and thereby acquired the right to deeds for the properties.

Frank made the application through a lawyer and they were duly obtained and registered. By that time the second rush had begun to recede. The enthusiasts saw the billions of their crazy hopes dwindle to millions, the millions to thousands, and the thousands to the price of a meal. The tide of newcomers stopped and commenced to go back. But there were still plenty who

had seen a lesson in the second rush. All of these who could do so either relocated their old claims or staked new ones and guarded their titles. They had reason to rejoice for this later. Fall was now on and Frank and Billy, who felt they were no longer tenderfoots, began work in earnest on the claim purchased by the former. As Billy had no interest in this property, Frank agreed to credit him with a percentage of the gold they took out. They worked steadily from early morn until darkness came on, but though they went deeper and deeper into the ground every day, nothing came of their labor.

At a certain level they imitated the method pursued on other claims and started a tunnel off the shaft. Frank was in hopes of hitting the rich ledge which ran clear through the Jumbo, or at least was supposed to run through that promising claim. He had named this property the Round Top, from the circumstances that the ground rose toward the center into a small, circular plateau of rock. Although the boys worked like beavers, with occasional help from outside miners, they made no discoveries. By the middle of December they had pushed the tunnel 100 feet without any satisfactory result whatever. Either the ledge Frank looked for did not pass through the property, or they were working above it, or not in the right direction. It was disappointing when all the mines of any promise in their neighborhood were panning out better and better every week. At length the first of the new year dawned and they had been six months in the Columbia Mountain district. They had greatly improved in health and strength, but not in worldly wealth.

"I guess I wasn't born lucky, Bill," Frank said one day when they knocked off for dinner. "If I had been, this claim would be a second Combination or Jumbo by this time. As it is, we are just hanging on by our teeth. I have hardly a cent left. It is fortunate Uncle Charley insists on giving me unlimited credit. If we had to pay spot cash for our meals we'd have to quit or pass the hat around among our acquaintances."

"Oh, we'll come out all right by and by," said Billy cheerfully.

"I hope so, but things don't look that way at present. My last letter to Bertha was not very optimistic, but I told her we intended to hang on somehow."

"Of course we'll hang on. Wasn't you offered three times as much for this claim as you gave for it in spite of the fact that we haven't turned up anythin'? Then there were two men here who wanted to lease it from you. Uncle Charley advised you to take them up. He said that the way we are workin' it we were losin' out time to no purpose. I heard that the January claim has been leased, and that is known to be a corkin' good one."

Uncle Charley had explained to Frank that the leasing system enabled the mine owner to get his property not, indeed, systematically developed, but thoroughly prospected, without expense to himself, and with all the chances of a fair profit besides. Then he is able to know how to handle his property and what expenditure for mine machinery and mills it will justify.

Frank, however, didn't like the proposition made to him by the two men, but it was a fair

one considering the undeveloped state and problematical values of his claim. He would have been willing to lease any of the other claims, but no one wanted to take a shy at them. The Round Top, being between the Jumbo and the Combination, though some distance from either, was considered the only promising property of all that he and Billy owned. This system of leasing the claim in small blocks started the final rush that stuck. The marvelous richness of the strikes soon made in quick succession was the principal factor, but without the leasing system those strikes would not have been made so quickly.

The amazing success of the January lease, where high values in large quantity were discovered within two feet of the surface, brought crowds into Goldfield again, and from that moment the success of the district was assured. With everybody making money around them, Frank and Billy prosecuted their unproductive operations. Their non-success had become a standing joke among their friends, who, while they admired the grit displayed by the boys, laughed at their puny efforts to develop the claim in the slow, old-fashioned systematic manner.

Uncle Charley, who believed the claim would pan out under the leasing system, was losing patience with Frank for refusing to accept offers already made, or to look for better terms. Such was the condition of affairs with the boys when Frank went to the claim alone one Sunday afternoon after dinner. He was feeling a bit blue, partly on account of his claim and partly because he had not received a letter from Bertha within what he considered a reasonable time. He walked into the shack and looked around at the collection of tools that was there not a very extensive one. He looked into the dynamite box and saw that it was empty.

"I thought there was one stick left, for we'll need it to-morrow. I'll have to borrow one from—"

That was the last thing he said or remembered for some time afterward, for he accompanied the word with a kick that sent the empty box against the wall where Billy had carelessly laid down their last stick of dynamite and forgot to return it to the box. The result was a sudden and terrific explosion that demolished the shack and sent Frank and the tools flying in every direction.

CHAPTER XI.—What the Dynamite Did.

It was a cold and clear day and being Sunday the sounds of labor were hushed. The miners were enjoying themselves in the saloons and in divers other ways around the main street of the now growing town of Goldfield. The explosion on the Round Top claim would have attracted some attention on a week day, but on that afternoon it startled a good part of the place. Scores of these were turned in the direction of a white cloud of smoke that for want of wind hung above the claim and then moved slowly away.

Nobody could understand the meaning of the explosion, though it was taken for granted that some dynamite had gone off accidentally. The general opinion was that somebody had suffered

a lot of property, but who that person was no one could guess. Small parties of the miners started off to investigate, as they had nothing else on their hands. In twos and threes they neared the Round Top claim. Everybody knew there were two shacks on this property. One of these was now a wreck on the ground, while the other had disappeared utterly, leaving in its place a great gaping hole in the rock and earth. Sticking out of a thick clump of bushes were a pair of legs. The legs hung limp and motionless as if they had ceased to interest their owner. The first two miners on the ground pulled the legs, with their attached body, out of the bushes and recognized Frank Scott, the owner of the claim, apparently dead. His clothes were badly torn and he looked like a wreck.

"He's done for, poor chap!" said one of the miners.

"No, he isn't," replied his companion, who was feeling about the boy's heart.

"Is he still alive?"

"Yes, and very much alive, too, from the beat of his heart."

"Here's my whisky flask. Pour some down his throat and see if it will revive him, and then we'll carry him up to the doctor's."

The whisky brought Frank to his senses with a rush. He sat up without any assistance.

"What's happened?" he asked in a dazed way.

"Don't you know?" asked one of the miners.

"No; seems to me there was an explosion somewhere and I was lifted into the air. That's all I remember. Oh, goodness? I don't see it at all, and our tools were in it. And the other seems to be a ruin. What scoundrel has done this?"

At that moment Billy came running up in great excitement.

"Oh, gracious, Frank, what has happened?" he cried, anxiously. "Are you badly hurt?"

"No, I'm not badly hurt as far as I can see," replied his pard. "But look at our shacks. They are demolished and I was in the big one when the explosion happened. This must be the work of Jim Moss and Bud Doble, who have doubtless sneaked back here and pulled this trick off on me. Nobody else would do such a thing."

"You were in the big shack and yet escaped with your life?" exclaimed one of the miners, with a look of astonishment. "Why, man alive, I shouldn't imagine there would be enough of you left to pick up."

"You must have been born lucky," said the other man.

Other miners had arrived by this time and were looking at the destruction caused by the dynamite. When they, too, heard that Frank had been in the shack that had been blown to pieces they could hardly credit it.

"Where did you land?" asked one.

"We picked him out of those bushes," said the first miner on the ground. "His feet were stickin' out or we wouldn't have seen him."

"And he's alive and kicking?" said the doctor. "Such an escape wouldn't happen again in a hundred years."

Frank explained how he had entered the shack and the last thing he remembered doing was kicking the empty dynamite case out of his way.

"There must have been a stick of dynamite in

it and you didn't notice it," said one of the spectators.

"No, there wasn't, for I examined the box for the single stick that I thought was in it. Do you know where that last stick of dynamite went to, Billy?"

"Yes; I took it out of the box myself."

"What did you do with it?"

"I stood it against the wall and forgot to take it away."

"Great Scott! Then that must have caused the explosion, for I kicked the box against the wall!" cried Frank. "Moss and Doble had nothing to do with it after all. Billy, your carelessness has wrecked our houses and lost us our tools, besides nearly putting me out of business."

Billy appeared much cut up by the knowledge of what he had done. A number of the miners were looking down into the hole under the foundation of the demolished shack. It was not a very deep hole, but it revealed a most surprising discovery to the experienced eyes of the men. They jumped into it and began examining pieces of the shattered rock, which was black-looking and resembled the product of the Jumbo. It wasn't many minutes before they called others up and handed them some of the specimens. The group around the hole began talking in an excited way.

"This is a ledge as sure as beans are beans, and from the looks of these specimens I'll gamble on it the stuff will assay anywhere from \$150 to \$300 a ton. The boys have struck luck at last, and it was the dynamite did it," said one.

"That's right. All the work they've been doing was so much wasted energy," said another, "for they were tunneling away from the right spot."

"What's the difference as long as they've struck the lode at last?"

"They wouldn't have struck it if dynamite hadn't gone off by accident and opened the vein up. I wonder how wide it is?"

"There's no telling till it's uncovered."

"That chap who was blown up was certainly born lucky. He owns this claim."

"This discovery will set the camp by the ears. The whole push will be down here to take a look as soon as the news gets around."

"It's the same kind of rock that's turning up so rich in the Jumbo," said a miner. "The chances are the same ledge runs right into and maybe through this claim. Who owns the claim yonder?"

"These boys do. They have claims all around this one."

"Great harpoons! They're liable to turn out millionaires. They'll have leasing offers to burn to-morrow."

It was at this point that Frank and Billy walked over to the hole, accompanied by some of the others.

"Say, young fellow, your fortune is made!" were the words that greeted Frank.

"How is that?" asked the boy, unconscious of the astonished result produced by the dynamite.

"Look down into the hole. What d'ye see there?"

"A streak of black rock and a lot of debris," replied Frank.

"I s'pose you don't know what that black streak amounts to?"

"Not in the least."

"It's a ledge, and it's just reeking with gold."

"What?" gasped the astonished boy.

"You're a lucky kid," said the man, slapping him on the back. "That stuff is going to pan out wonders. But the extent of your good fortune depends on the extent of the ledge. If it's pretty wide and runs through your claim, why, you can go and tell the Jumbo people that they hain't got much on you."

"Are you telling me the truth?" asked the excited Frank.

"Am I? Say, pard, ask any of these chaps who's been sizing up pieces of the ore if what I have said ain't so."

"That's right," nodded one of the men. "This looks like an uncommon rich strike—as rich as anything that's been hit in these diggings."

"Hurrah!" yelled Billy, throwing his hat into the air, and then turning a hand-spring, expressive of his delight.

"Here, Dugan, just hand up a bunch of that ore," said the man who had told Frank of his good fortune. "Give me your hat," to Billy.

Billy's hat was filled with specimens.

"Here you are. Take that stuff and show it to Uncle Charley," handing the loaded hat to Frank. "If he does not agree with us you can call us the biggest liars under the sun."

Frank hardly knew whether he was standing on his head or his feet. That he had struck luck at last seemed too good to be true. And it didn't come any too soon, for he and Billy were on their last legs, particularly after the loss of all their tools and the wreck of the two shacks, which represented a considerable loss, considering the cost of lumber. It was a noisy and excited procession, with Frank and Billy at its head, that wended its way up to the unpaved street of Goldfield town.

The news of the find spread around from mouth to mouth, and a big crowd soon gathered at the hotel where Frank was presently displaying his hat full of specimens before the surprised eyes of Uncle Charley. The hotelkeeper declared the specimens to be uncommonly rich in gold—fully as fine as any found in the diggings to date, and congratulated Frank on his luck.

"You want to mark this date down as a red-letter day in your calendar. But I say you look as if you'd been drawn through a knot-hole. What happened to you?" asked Brown. "Were you mixed up in that explosion I heard?"

"Was I? I should think I was! One of my shacks was blown clean to pieces by a charge of dynamite, and I was in it at the time. It's a most astonishing thing that I escaped with only a few scratches."

"You don't say! How came the dynamite to go off?"

Frank explained matters and wound up by telling the hotel man that it was the accidental explosion which had opened up the ground at the point where the lode ran through his property. Brown also declared that Frank must have been born lucky.

"I call that being kicked into good fortune, for it seems you have been working away from the ledge ever since you began operations. By that time nearly every one in Goldfield had heard of the great discovery at the Round Top claim, and probably half the population of the new town visited the hole and examined the specimens in the hole and that part of the ledge which was

exposed to view. The big claim and mine owners sent messengers to find out if the report was true, and their agents confirmed the report, bringing them specimens of the ore as evidence of the fact. Frank bought a new suit of clothes after getting away from Uncle Charley, notwithstanding that it was Sunday, for he didn't care to wear his torn ones any longer than he could help. He put the demoralized suit carefully away in his trunk to keep as a reminder of the strenuous experience he had been through, and the luck that had come to him in consequence. Before supper he sat down and wrote a long letter to Bertha, in which he told her that Dame Fortune had knocked on his door at last, and that if half of the predictions of the miners who had examined his find came true he would become a rich man in a very short time.

He explained how the discovery came about through Billy's carelessness in leaving a stick of dynamite exposed to the chance of an accident.

"If it wasn't for joy at the discovery of the ledge, Billy would be all broke up over his careless act, which came within an ace of making an angel of me. Since I have suffered no material injury by the explosion, Billy is rather glad that he was the cause of bringing fortune to my door," concluded Frank.

Inside of thirty-six hours the news reached Tonopah and created another ripple of excitement. Jared Cooke was pleased to learn that Frank's claim had turned up a winner at last for, in his opinion, no one deserved luck more.

CHAPTER XII.—Leasing His Claims.

Frank purchased new tools in the morning and he and Billy went to work in the hole where the ledge was. They had been at work about two hours when two men came to the claim and told Frank that they would like to help him form a company so as to get capital necessary to develop the mine properly.

"You're only wasting your time, young man," said one of the men, "working the way you are doing. You and your pard can only make very little progress getting out the ore you have in sight. The right thing to do is to either form a company and sell the stock, or lease your claim for three or four months to responsible persons. If you are willing to make a lease we would like the first chance to bid on it. You are bound to have a number of offers, and it will be up to you to take up with the proposition that suits you best. We are practical mining men, and I can refer you to any of the mine owners in this vicinity as to our ability to do the right thing if we take hold of your claim. We will do all the work at our own expense and pay you a good percentage on the value of the ore we take out of the ground. All you need do will be to have a representative on the ground to look after your interests, or you can look after it yourself."

Frank said he would consider the proposition, and the men went away. He had other visitors on the same errand that day, but would not commit himself in any way.

"You may submit a written bid for a lease, stating time and terms, and I will consider it. It must be accompanied with good reference as to

your standing as mining men. I shall do nothing, however, until I return from Tonopah, where I expect to go to-morrow or next day to have my specimens assayed. You are at liberty to look over the claim, pick your own specimens and have assays made on which to base your bid," said Frank to the different applicants.

The boys uncovered quite a bit of the ledge that day, taking specimens from different places, all of which seemed about the same to their unpracticed eyes. They dug across the ledge, not in the direction it ran, in order to find out its width at that point. Frank labored in one direction, while Billy worked in the opposite. When they quit, just before dark, they had ten feet of its exposed and neither end was yet in sight. Of course, it didn't follow that it would run of equal width, for all ledges vary in that respect, but still it was a satisfaction to Frank to know that it must be at least twelve feet wide where they were working, with the chances that it was even more than that. On the following day Frank took his bag of specimens to Tonopah on the coach.

"You boys have made a lucky strike, I hear," said Driver Burns.

"Yes. The miners who have looked it over all say that it's a rich one," replied Frank.

"Waal, now, I'm right glad to hear that. You chaps have stuck to your claims right along and worked like beavers, and if any one is entitled to somethin' above the ordinary I think you fellows are," said the driver.

"I think we are, but it wasn't our work that brought us to the ledge."

"Struck it by accident, I heard. A charge of dynamite goin' off accidentally opened up the ground where the payrock was. They say the explosion nearly blew you into the next world."

"That's no story. I was blown fully thirty feet with the ruins of the shack. A couple of miners, attracted by the sound, pulled me, unconscious, out of the bushes. They thought at first that I was dead, but, as a matter of fact, I was scarcely hurt. Wonderful, wasn't it?"

"Waal, I reckon. It ain't often a chap is hit by dynamite and lives to tell the tale," replied the driver.

Frank stayed several days in Tonopah, and while there was regarded with considerable interest. Jared Cooke congratulated him on his luck and said it was rather a surprise to him that they, without any knowledge of mining whatever, had come out at the top of the heap. He was waited on by two parties who wanted to make leasing arrangements with him as soon as they had inspected his claim. He told them they were welcome to look at his property and put in their bid. Both men intended to form a company to furnish the capital to work his claim during the term of the lease, if they secured it. Frank talked with Cooke about the leasing business, and the hotel man advised him to go into it, but told him to be particular about the men he made the lease with.

"Arrange with the right people and you ought to do well, even if their bid is lower than others not so responsible," said Cooke. "They will advertise your mine in advertising themselves, so that afterward, when the lease has run out, if the prospect of your property is still good, you will be able to get your stock on the market easier if you should form a company, as no doubt you will."

When Frank got back to Goldfield he found that Billy had uncovered the ledge in three places and that it ran seventeen feet in the original spot, fourteen in another and twelve in the third.

"There's been a couple of bearded fellows hanging around here since you left. They seemed to be mighty curious, and I didn't like their actions much. They were strangers as far as I could tell, for I don't remember seein' them around town," said Billy.

"Strangers are coming here every day," replied Frank, "and a rich strike always attracts attention, particularly when people hear how this strike was uncovered by an accidental explosion of dynamite."

"They ain't the only strangers who've been here, but they acted different to anybody else. I took them for suspicious characters. How about those two chaps who tried to hold up the stage that time? They were not caught, I s'pose?"

"No. The sheriff and a posse looked for them for a week, but failed to find any trace of them."

Frank told Billy that he had about made up his mind to lease his claim to a good, reliable party on the best-sharing terms he could get.

"Everybody I've spoken to on the subject assures me that is the only thing for us to do, seeing that we haven't got any capital to push things," he said.

"I guess you're right, boss. I'd like to be able to lease my claims, but I can't find anybody willin' to tackle them," said Billy.

"As soon as the lessees get to work I'll be able to raise some funds. That is what we need badly. It will enable us to hire some practical man to prospect your property and point out the most promising place for us to go to work to see what's in it. You've helped work my claim, so now I'm going to help you do something with your ground. I intend to spend a part of the money I get out of my claim in trying to put you on your feet."

"That's kind of you, Frank, but, then, you've always been kind to me since the first day you saved me from Jim Moss in the factory," said Billy.

"If your claims turn out poor, or no good at all, you shall have a share in mine. I'm going to see that your future is provided for in any case."

Billy expressed his gratitude, and then, as it was dinner-time, they went to the hotel, where they already owed Uncle Charley quite a score, which he never thought of dunning them for.

During the week Frank made a lease with two mining men, whose reliability was beyond question. These men had some capital, but not near enough to work the Round Top claim, and the rest of Frank's claims which were included in the lease, on a scale that they proposed doing in order to get out as much of the ore as possible within the term the lease had to run. So they formed a leasing company right away and sold the bulk of the stock to their friends and acquaintances at 25 cents a share. The balance was put into the hands of a promoter to offer later at 50 cents to the outside public. Frank took a thousand shares, with the understanding that the price, \$250, was to be deducted from his leasing receipts, in two instalments.

In a very short time the leasing company began work in a small way, gradually increasing its operations, and as the ore ledge was not more

than six feet below the surface for some distance, the gold-bearing rock was taken out very fast. Frank raised enough funds to start a prospector on Billy's property, and in the course of a couple of weeks the two boys were at work driving a shaft down into the earth where there was prospects of a return for their labor.

Summer was coming on again and the boys had been nearly a year in Goldfield. Frank corresponded with considerable regularity with Bertha, sending and receiving a letter every fortnight.

He was a fine, strapping, sun-burned young fellow by this time, twice as vigorous as when he left Cottonville, while Billy wouldn't have been recognized by his own mother, had she been alive.

Things were going fine with them both, though Frank was the only one who was really making any money. The first receipts from his lease settled all their debt and put the boys on their feet, financially. Frank believed that all their real troubles were over, but, then, he didn't dream that there were enemies at work watching for the chance to get back at both him and Billy.

CHAPTER XIII.—Captured.

"Say, Billy, I'm going to Tonopah to-morrow afternoon. What's the matter with you going along? You haven't been there since we first left the camp for this district, nearly a year ago, and it's improved a whole lot during that time. Your property won't run away while you're off on a three-days' vacation, nor do I apprehend that any one will steal the ore that is out on the dump. So what do you say?"

"I'm with you, boss!" replied Bill, cheerfully, for the idea appealed to him. So the next afternoon they started in the stage. Dan Burns was not on the seat this time. A new man had relieved him for a week, at least that is what he told Frank as they drove along out of the town and started across the desert. Dusk was setting in when they reached the ridge which was the scene of the young miner's wild ride that ever-to-be-remembered night. Here the driver stopped to water his animals before attempting the downward passage. Frank and Billy got down to stretch their limbs. Suddenly three rough-looking men came from behind a ledge of rock. They had revolvers in their hands and masks across their faces. A fourth man, with a rifle, appeared on top of the ridge and called on the driver to throw down the express chest which was under his seat.

"By George! A hold-up!" cried Frank, drawing his revolver and jumping behind the coach, followed by Billy.

A revolver shot followed them, but did no damage. Frank peered around the hind wheel and fired at one of the rascals. He fell, with a bullet in his thigh. The two other men returned his fire and then made a rush. Billy fired at them, but missed in the gloom. There were two inside passengers and they whipped out their guns as the driver tossed down the express box. Before they could fire the driver whipped up and the stage disappeared into the ridge, leaving the boys behind and fully exposed to the enemy.

The man with the rifle covered their shadowy figures and ordered them to throw up their hands.

With two revolvers also aimed at their heads, they had no alternative but to obey.

The men took their revolvers away and bound their hands behind them, in a rough way. Then they were backed up against a boulder and told to stand there. The wounded man was attended to by one of his comrades, while the other picked up a heavy rock, and after repeated efforts, smashed the cover of the express box. The chap with the rifle led up a burro with side panniers. The contents of the express box was transferred to the bags. Three other burros were brought into view and the wounded man was assisted on one, while he swore like a trooper from the pain of his injury. Frank and Billy were then tied on two of the animals, just behind the saddles, into which two of the scoundrels swung themselves. Then, at a word from the leader, the party took a narrow and tortuous path along the ridge, away from the stage trail. Not a word was exchanged by the rascals as they followed their leader in single file into the wild depths of the ridge.

There was no moon out to light their way, but the starlit sky was perfectly clear and furnished all the illumination the men seemed to care for.

The way was evidently familiar to them for they went forward without hesitation at a quick trot. Deeper and deeper they penetrated into the mountainous ridge which skirted that side of the desert, and Frank wondered where they were taking him and Billy, and what their object was in carrying them off. Several hours passed and the party kept steadily onward. At length the leader called a halt beside a small mountain stream, evidently only for the purpose of refreshing the burros, for when they had drank, the forward march was resumed and kept up without intermission for a number of hours longer, when a large cave was reached. All dismounted and the boys and wounded rascal were lifted down and taken inside. Here Frank and Billy saw half a dozen forms asleep on the ground, lying upon blankets. One of them woke up and began talking with the newcomers. He showed no curiosity regarding the two young prisoners, and presently turned over and went to sleep again. The men had removed their masks during the journey, revealing their unkempt and bearded faces. They all appeared to be hard-looking characters, as well as the boys could make out.

A lantern was lighted and one of the men, carrying it in his hand, walked over to the prisoners.

"How do you feel, Frank Scott?" he said, with a malicious laugh.

Frank was surprised at being thus addressed by name, and looked searchingly at the fellow, who clearly knew him. He was bearded and bronzed, and the boy was unable to saw where he had met the man before. Billy also gazed keenly at the chap, whose voice seemed familiar to him.

"Don't remember me, eh?" grinned the ruffian, holding the lantern up beside his face. "Take a good look and then maybe you'll get on to who I am."

"I never saw you before to my knowledge," said Frank.

"I know you," said Billy, after examining the rascal's features. "You're Jim Moss."

"Right you are, Bunker. I'm Jim Moss, once a factory foreman in Cottonville, and now—"

"A mountain bandit, I suppose," said Frank.

"Who made me one? You two chaps."

"Not much. You are the arbiter of your own destiny," said Frank.

"And the arbiter, as you call it, of yours and Bunker's, too. I've sworn to get square with you both and have been lying low for this chance. You're both in my power now."

"Are you the leader of these men?"

"No, but what I say goes a long way. There's only one chance for you to save yourselves, and I'll offer it to you."

"What is it?"

"You can buy yourselves off. If you agree to that I'll consider everything square between us. Revenge is all right, but money is better."

"You want us to ransom ourselves, is that it?"

"That's it."

"What's your figure?"

"You own a claim that will probably pan out anywhere from half to a full million, from present indications. There are ten of us in this crowd and we want \$10,000 apiece. Those are our terms —nothing more, nothing less."

"Where do you think I am going to get so much money if I were to agree to your proposition?"

"Out of your mine."

"Yes? It will be many months before I shall receive half of \$100,000 from my claim, no matter how rich it is. It is now being worked on a lease."

"We know all about it. We don't expect to get the money before you get it. We believe you're a chap of your word and are willing to take chances that you'll do the right thing if you say you will. A month from now you'll probably have over \$15,000. Agree to deposit \$10,000 of that in the Tonopah Bank to the order of the person whose name we'll give you and promise to continue to deposit the same amount every three months after that and we'll let you go. When you have paid in \$100,000 the bargain will be closed."

"Suppose I refuse to do so?"

"Then you'll never see daylight again after tomorrow morning, either of you."

"Which means you intend to murder us?"

"That name might apply to your case in the long run, but we'll see that you live for thirty days unless you do yourself up, so as to give you the chance to reconsider your determination. We prefer your money to your life, and one or the other you've got to give up in the end."

"For my part, I prefer to take the chances rather than make any such bargain with you. Billy can do as he chooses."

"He hasn't got any chance or say in the matter. You are the chap who decides the fate of both."

"You hear, Billy," said Frank. "Do you want me to compromise with this rascal?"

"No. I'll take my chances with you," replied Billy.

"Is that your answer?" asked Moss, in an ugly tone.

"That's our answer."

"All right. I'll report it to the boys, and I guess they'll know what to do with you."

Thus speaking, Moss turned on his heel and

rejoined his three comrades. They appeared to consult together, after which they got their blankets and lay down on them, the wounded man reclining against the wall in a position where he could note any movement made by the prisoners. In a short time he and the boys were the only wakeful ones in the cave.

CHAPTER XIV.—The Hole in the Side Tunnel.

"I'm afraid we're in a tight fix, Billy," said Frank, who was propped up against the wall beside his friend.

"I guess we are. Moss is dead against us," replied Bunker.

"I don't see what good it's going to do this gang to put us out of the way."

"It won't do them any good. They'll try to get you to make the bargain with them before hurting either of us."

"But I'm not going to give up \$100,000, if I should make that much, to these scoundrels."

"They figure that your claim is worth half a million at least."

"You might promise them anythin', and when we get free put the sheriff on their trail. All's fair in such crooked business as this," said Billy.

"No, Billy, I'm not going to pass my word and then break it. If these scoundrels trusted to my honor I'd have to keep faith with them."

"I don't see why you should. An agreement made under compulsion is never bindin'."

"Well, I don't intend to make one, then I won't have to keep it."

They talked a while longer on the subject, and then the weariness that had attended their journey overcame them and they fell asleep. The morning was advanced when Jim Moss awakened them to the consciousness of their unpleasant situation.

He brought them a portion of the fare the gang had for breakfast, and when they had eaten he asked Frank if he had reconsidered his determination.

"No, I haven't," replied the young miner.

"Then you'll remain prisoners in the tunnel of an old mine till you do. But you'll have to decide in a month at the outside. We won't take care of you after that, and the moment we leave you to yourselves you'll starve to death."

"And what will you gain in that case?" asked Frank.

"The gang will gain nothing, but I'll at least have revenge on you chaps, and that is something," said Moss.

"That will be poor satisfaction in the long run, as you'll find out."

"You think so, eh? You don't know me," and the rascal walked away.

They were not bothered again until late in the afternoon, when the bandits, as they might be called, returned from various trips they had made. The boys, however, had not been left unguarded, for the wounded man and another member of the gang remained in the cave while the others were away. Dinner was prepared and served around, the two prisoners getting their share. Jim Moss once more interviewed Frank, and finding that he showed no evidences of weakening, called up one of his comrades.

The boys were hauled on their feet and led outside.

The boys were led a short way along the trail, then into a ravine, and finally to a hole in the ground, the sides of which were faced with boards, nailed on timbers braced by sundry beams in place. The boards and beams were old and weather-beaten, and showed signs of decay, which indicated that they had been there a great many years. Apparently this was the shaft leading to the abandoned mine.

An old rope hung down into the shaft, the depth of which the boys could not gauge with their eyes. The pulley over which it had once worked was gone, and only a portion of the beam to which it had been attached remained. The rope was tied to this.

Moss and his companion drew their revolvers.

"You'll have to go down that rope, one at a time," said Moss. "If you refuse we'll throw you down and that will settle you right away, for the shaft is fifty feet deep. Cut that lad loose," he said to his companion, indicating Billy. "If you turn on us we'll shoot, so you'd better think twice before you try such a thing. The rope reaches within a few feet of the bottom. If you slide down carefully you won't get hurt. Tomorrow morning we'll lower some grub to you, so look out for it. Now start, Bunker."

Billy saw that any resistance would be useless, so he seized hold of the rope, swung out on it and slid down out of sight without exchanging a word with either rascal. When the rope slackened and Moss found it was free, Frank was cut loose and ordered to follow his friend. He did so, also in silence, and reached the bottom beside Billy.

The rope was then hauled up and the rascals departed, leaving the prisoners in the deep gloom of the pit.

Frank lit a match and its light showed them the mouth of a tunnel, running away from the shaft. Somebody had been down there lately, for a partly burned resinous torch stood against the wall. Frank ignited it with another match and waved it around his head till it blazed up.

"Come on. Let us see where this goes," he said.

Billy followed him into the tunnel.

"Gold has been found here once upon a time or this tunnel would not have been bored. It seems to have been abandoned a good while ago," said Frank.

"The paying ore petered out or it wouldn't have been given up," said Billy.

"Of course. A mine is not thrown over as long as it is worth the trouble of working."

This mine had evidently been worked to some considerable extent, from the size of the tunnel, but the methods used seemed to have been old-fashioned. Clearly, this mine dated from times long prior to the invasion of the desert by the up-to-date miner. There were side tunnels of smaller size and extent, leading off the main one. In the course of an hour the boys found themselves at the end of one of these.

Here they noticed that the air seemed purer than elsewhere underground, as if there was an opening somewhere above. By swinging the torch above his head, and watching the direction in which the smoke was drawn upward and seemed to disappear at one place, Frank guessed there

must be a crack in the wall of some size. He called Billy's attention to the fact.

"Maybe we can make our escape that way," said Billy.

"First, one of us will have to climb up and see what the chance is," said Frank.

"That oughtn't to be so hard, for the wall is rough and full of projecting rocks."

"Well, you hold the torch and I'll make the attempt."

Frank started up the almost sheer side of the tunnel, but there were lots of rock ends that furnished him with foothold and a place to grip with his hands. Still it was rather an awkward climb and it took time. At the height of thirty feet, where the tunnel narrowed into a natural roof, he found the opening.

It was not near wide enough for a person to pass through, but after examining it by the light of a match or two, he saw that one side of it was formed of earth and small rocks so that it seemed an easy matter to widen the orifice to a size large enough to enable him and Billy to pass through into what appeared to be a mass of brush that no doubt stood in the open air.

Whether it was the open air, Frank was unable to tell as darkness lay upon the face of Nature at that moment. Balancing himself on a couple of projecting stones, he drew his jack-knife from his pocket and started to see what impression he could make on the earth and miscellaneous debris around the narrow opening. He found, as he anticipated, that it yielded readily, falling in a shower to the floor of the tunnel close to where Billy stood holding the fast-expiring torch.

After a fair trial, which was quite satisfactory, he descended to the ground and in a few words communicated the news to his pard.

"It's my opinion we'll be able to leave our prison and get into the outer air by the way of that fissure after it has been sufficiently enlarged," said Frank. "We won't begin operations till after we have had breakfast in the morning, as the torch won't last a great while. I believe that a glimmer of daylight comes through that hole when the sun is up and that will afford light enough to work by."

"We may have to wait some time for those rascals to send us down our morning grub, and thereby lose a good deal of time," said Billy.

"No, I'll fix that. We'll sleep near the mouth of the shaft. We're accustomed to wake up about sunrise. As soon as we do we can tell if it's light by looking up the shaft. If it is I'll come here and go to work and you will wait till you hear from our captors. Then you can bring the grub here and we'll eat it. After that we'll both work alternately at the hole."

"All right, boss. Whatever you say goes with me," replied Billy.

They walked out into the main tunnel and started for the shaft, their torch expiring before they reached it.

CHAPTER XV.—From Miner to Millionaire.

The program, as outlined by Frank, was duly carried into effect. When they awoke in the morning daylight was shining into the mouth

of the old shaft. Leaving Billy to watch for the appearance of their breakfast, Frank started in the darkness of the main tunnel for the side tunnel. There was little fear of him going astray, as the side tunnel in question was the only one that opened off the left side. All the other side tunnels opened off on the right side. When he reached the tunnel he walked to the end of it and looked up.

To his great satisfaction he saw a thin streak of daylight shooting in near the roof. He climbed up with great care in the dark until he reached the stones on which he could support his feet. Then taking out his knife he began work, having seen that the hole opened out into a brush-covered defile, with the bright blue sky above.

In the course of an hour, during which Frank worked away steadily, he enlarged the opening considerably. The position in which he worked was rather an awkward one, but that could not be helped. He made the best of it, resting when he felt tired and resuming after a short interval. He found one good-sized stone in the way and spent another hour or more loosening it so he could work it out.

When it dropped into the tunnel he found room enough to crawl into the hole and rest more at his ease. He was feeling very hungry by this time and wondered when Billy would show up with the breakfast from above. Another half hour passed before he heard his pard shouting to him as he came along in the dark.

The grub consisted of cheese and crackers, with a hunk of canned corned beef. Their drink, two whisky flasks full of spring water. When the light meal was despatched, Billy took the knife, climbed up and continued the good work which Frank had begun. By noon the hole was big enough for them to squeeze through and they lost no time in doing so. Frank stuffed up the hole with brush and then they stepped out into the defile.

The question now was how were they to find their way back to the spot where they had been captured? If they could reach that place they could count on being taken up either by the coach when it came along or by one of the many teams that now passed that way daily. If they went in the wrong direction the chances were they would starve in the wilds of the ridge and their bones might not be found for many months.

They expected to have to make their way on foot, and even if they started off right there were a score of chances against their being able to follow the right course. Without food or water they might expect to suffer great hardship, though it was probable they would meet with mountain streams where they could quench their thirst. After a short consultation they started off up the ravine. Fifteen minutes later, on turning a corner, they saw the entrance to the cave where the rascals apparently had their headquarters. No one was about on the outside.

Frank decided to make the attempt himself, and he did. He found the cave empty. It didn't take him long to find a supply of provisions. They filled two empty bottles with water from the stream outside and then resumed their way. The actual distance in a straight line they had to travel was not great, and had they known the way they would have accomplished it in six or seven hours.

But they did not follow the right course and consequently three days elapsed before they came out on the edge of the desert, and then they were miles away from the place they had aimed to reach. The only thing they could do was to tramp it along the ridge till they at length reached the opening where all vehicles passed between Goldfield and Tonopah.

There was a stream at this point where the burros were watered, and they got all the water they wanted. In the course of a couple of hours a train appeared, bound for Tonopah, and the boys took passage on one of the wagons, after explaining how they came to be in their predicament. They reached the big mining camp early next day and received a cordial greeting from Jared Cooke, who was astonished at their story. The sheriff of the county was at once informed of the circumstances, and about where the gang of rascals were likely to be found. He quickly gathered a strong posse and started out to round them up.

Two days later he returned with half of the rascals, Jim Moss among the number. The ruffians were tried and sent to jail for a long period, and so Jim Moss got what was coming to him at last. In due time Frank and Billy returned to Goldfield, and during the month made a pretty good find in Billy's claim. Billy succeeded in getting some moneyed chaps to lease all his ground, and he got a very fair dividend out of the lease. Frank was making big money out of his claims, for the ore turned out was all high grade and panned out from \$150 to \$400 a ton. When the lease of his mine terminated he was in a good position to form a stock company, but while he was arranging for this a clique of Eastern capitalists, after inspecting his property, offered him \$1,000,000 cash for it. He agreed to take it if Billy could find a purchaser for his claims. The clique then offered \$100,000 for Billy's property, and the offer was accepted, and so the double deal was put through.

Hardly were things consummated when Frank received a letter from a lawyer of Cottonville, informing him that his uncle had just died and left him all his property in the place, worth something over \$200,000.

Frank and Billy lost no time in returning to the Southern town, where Frank took possession of his legacy, and Billy went to live with him as an independent young gentleman. In a short time Frank asked Bertha to marry him, and her reply was favorable. Six months later she became mistress of the Crosby mansion, and her mother went there to live also.

Next week's issue will contain: "HAL HALMAN'S TIP; OR, SCOOPING THE WALL STREET MARKET."



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SHORT-STOP SAM

or

The Boss of the Baseball Boys

By GASTON GARNE

(A Serial Story.)

CHAPTER IV.—(Continued.)

The next inning began, and the Peerless boys started in to hold the lead they had gained.

The score was three to nothing in their favor, and they meant to win now.

Frank Timlin went to the bat and batted out a neat single.

Then Catcher Jones followed with a sacrifice, and Frank got to second.

There was one out, but a chance for another run.

Harry Bates got his base on balls, and then Seaver cracked out a safe one, and the bases were full, with only one out.

The rooters were now letting themselves out for fair. They seemed to have gone crazy, and nothing would satisfy them until at least one run came in.

Pete Perkins, one of the best batters of the nine, stepped up, and much to the dismay of those who knew his qualities, struck out.

Dan Reardon then stepped up and hit a liner to right-field.

It struck the ground about six feet ahead of the fielder, though he made a great effort to get it.

A run came in, and the bases were still filled, with two out.

More than half the spectators were on their feet when the fourth run came in, yelling themselves hoarse.

Luck was with the home team just then, for McGuire stepped up and drove a grounder out, which went between the legs of the shortstop, but was neatly picked up by the leftfielder.

But another run came in, and the rest moved up a base, though it was a close call at third.

"Five ter nothin'!" screamed the boy who had been on the fence, who now had worked his way to the ropes in front of the bleachers. "Gee! Here comes Shortstop Sam, fellers! Now, look out fur a homer!"

Our hero heard the words of the youngster plainly, but whether they incited him to do something surprising or not it is hard to tell.

Anyhow, he hit the first ball pitched to him, and sent it high in the air toward the fence back of the centerfielder.

"Everybody run!" yelled Harry Bates, who was coaching at third.

"Everybody did run, too!"

But it was hardly necessary for them to run so fast, for the ball cleared the fence by a few inches, and went over into the coal yard that was on the other side.

Short-stop Sam, as the youngster had dubbed him, went around the bases with the speed of a track horse. He was at third when the center-

fielder reached the top of the fence to get the ball.

Then he slackened speed and trotted in and tallied.

"Nine to nothing!"

More than a hundred spectators yelled this, waving their hats and handkerchiefs as they did so.

Some of the more enthusiastic of them rushed upon the diamond and caught Sam and pushed him upon their shoulders.

"Hooray fur Short-stop Sam!" piped the redoubtable small boy, and then it seemed as though everybody joined in the cheering.

Our hero was very modest through it all.

As soon as he could get free from his admirers he threw his coat over his shoulders and went to the bench and sat down.

It was while he sat there that Len Marks appeared, a bottle in his hand.

"Have a sip of ginger-ale, Walters," he said, popping the cork. "You need a little something after doing what you did."

Sam took the bottle, not a little surprised, and Marks stepped back.

Our hero was just going to drink the contents of the bottle when Timlin, who had followed him to the bat, struck out.

No one felt really disappointed at this, for they had done their share that inning.

Harry Bates called Sam, so the boy turned to the scorer and handed him the bottle of ginger-ale.

"Drink it; I don't want it," he said.

"Thanks!" was the reply, and the scorer promptly swallowed the contents.

Sam had his little talk with the captain, and stepped over to his position at short-stop. He had barely got there when there was a commotion near the players' bench, and all hands rushed up to see what caused it.

CHAPTER V.

Peerless Wins the Game.

The scorer had been taken with a fit!" cried Fred Jones, as Short-stop Sam and the other players rushed up. "Keep back, there! Don't shut off the air."

Sam got close enough to see that it was the boy he had given the bottle of ginger-ale to who was the sufferer.

He was writhing on the ground at a great rate, and frothing at the mouth.

As is usually the case, a crowd gathered around in no time, and but few offered to do anything.

Sam Walters was a cool-headed boy.

"Get back and give him air!" he cried, pushing his way through the crowd. "You are only making it worse for the poor fellow. Get back, I say!"

The boy's words had a wonderful effect on them.

Probably it was because they recognized him as the hero of the ball game; but, anyhow, they got back.

There happened to be two or three physicians on the grandstand, and one of them arrived on the scene in short order, and the unfortunate

boy, whose name was Horace Simms, was quickly removed to a couch in the dressing-room near the grandstand.

Then restoratives were applied and he was soon quieted.

"The boy has swallowed some poisonous drug," said the attending physician. "Does any one remember seeing him eat or drink anything in the past ten or fifteen minutes?"

"He drank a bottle of ginger-ale that I gave him," spoke up Sam. "It was handed to me by one of the club members after I made the home run, but I did not feel just like drinking it, so I gave it to the scorer. If that is what made him sick I am more than sorry."

"Well, if you had swallowed that ginger-ale I guess you would not have been able to play any more ball this afternoon," said the doctor. "There is nothing so very serious about it, only that he will be sick for several hours. In fact, he will not be all right until to-morrow, I am afraid. I would like to see the bottle the stuff was in that he drank."

Pete Perkins ran to the bench where the scorers had been sitting, but failed to find the empty bottle, or any traces of it.

"That's funny," said the gawky third baseman. "I wonder who could have taken the bottle?"

This was a sort of mystery, but as there were several who had seen Simms drink the ginger-ale it satisfied the physician that it was the cause of the boy's illness.

"But there must have been something in the bottle besides ginger-ale," he insisted.

The other two medical men corroborated his statement.

They also declared that there was no danger of Simms dying, and that he would be all right in a few hours.

"Who gave you the ginger-ale, Sam?" asked Harry Bates, as the boys went back to the diamond to renew the game.

"Len Marks," replied the short-stop.

"What!"

"Yes, he brought the bottle to me and popped the cork and handed it to me. Said I was entitled to something to drink after making the home run."

"It looks suspicious to me, Sam."

"Well, Marks was about the last one I expected to have treat me, that's fact."

"Marks don't like you, Sam. I am sure of that; he is mad because you joined the club. He wanted to get on the team the worst way. I know he is an awful sneak, but could he have been contemptible enough to dose you, so you would have to quit playing? If I was sure of it I'd punch his ugly face!"

"Well," said Short-stop Sam. "if that ginger-ale was drugged it was surely meant for me. Since I have got an enemy, I am very glad I have found it out. Don't say anything about this, Harry. I am glad the stuff did not hurt Horace Simms more than it did."

"All right, Sam."

"Play ball!" called out the umpire, and the fielders took their positions again.

The next inning of the Edgertons proved to be as bad as the first to them.

Short-stop Sam threw two out at first, and one man struck out, with two men on bases.

The captain of the Edgertons was looking rather blue when they went into the field.

But the pitcher settled right down to business, and as he was supported finely by the infield, the Peerless boys failed to score during their half of the inning.

This caused the spirits of the visitor to rise, but they could see nothing but ultimate defeat ahead of them, unless the unexpected happened.

"You fellows were in a great streak of luck the first innings," said the captain to Harry Bates, as they came in from the field. "It will be our turn next."

"All right," was the laughing reply. "We have made our runs, but you have got to make yours."

"You are a much better nine than we gave you the credit of being. I don't mind telling you that. Your short-stop is the best I ever saw outside of a professional club."

"And he is only a little boy, too," spoke up Pete Perkins, a broad grin on his homely, honest face.

"Well, we won't squeal if we get beat," was all the captain had to say.

In the fourth inning both sides scored once, and that made it ten to one.

Some of the visitors seemed to be happy over the fact that they were not going to be "white-washed," anyhow, and they said it so their opponents could hear it.

Up to the eighth inning neither side scored another run.

Sam distinguished himself again and again. He made several brilliant pickups, and his throwing to first was faultless.

He was virtually the life of the game.

In the eighth inning O'Donnell was the first to the bat, and he reached first on balls.

Short-stop Sam followed, and drove him around to third with a neat two-bagger.

Timlin knocked a hot grounder to short, but it was held to keep O'Donnell from scoring.

Fred Jones could not find the ball, and after three attempts went to the bench.

When Captain Bates stepped up it seemed as though at least another run would be got in.

But the Sharpton rooters were doomed to be disappointed, for Bates knocked a foul straight up in the air, and the catcher nabbed it in great shape.

Then Lon Seaver struck out and the side was retired.

The first of their bad luck came to the Peerless boys when the visitors went to the bat in this inning.

The bases were filled, with two men out, when Timlin had the misfortune to send a run in by giving a man his base on balls.

Things will happen that way sometimes, and as he had pitched a magnificent game, so far, no one opened their mouth to censure him, or find fault.

But his ill-luck was not done yet, for when the next batter stepped up the first ball pitched struck him on the thigh.

"Take your base," said the umpire, so another run was forced in.

"Steady, Frank!" called out Captain Bates.

"Take your time."

(To be continued.)

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INTERESTING ARTICLES

A NEW HAVEN SINNER

In 1647 William Blagden, a resident of New Haven, had the misfortune to fall into the water late one Saturday night. He could light no fire on Sunday according to his interpretation of the Blue Laws, so while his suit and undergarments were drying in the air, William lay in bed to keep warm and did not go to church. They kept close watch in those days on delinquent worshipers, so this offender was called upon to explain. In spite of what would seem a very good excuse, Blagden was adjudged guilty of "slothfulness" and sentenced to be "publicly whipped."

BRICK PARTITIONS

Bearing partitions of brick in modern construction have almost entirely given way to partitions of wood or some of the several types of tile of either clay or gypsum. But a new type of partition, built of common brick laid on edge, promises to bring brick again into high favor with those who demand soundproofness along with a load-bearing capacity of high degree.

This type of wall was developed in Detroit, and is being used in office buildings where soundproof walls are indispensable, and in commercial buildings where strength in supporting walls is a necessity along with absence of sound transmission. The wall has been tested for both qualities, and has registered unusually high in both respects.

FAMILY OF SEVEN NEEDS \$525, CHARITIES BUREAU PLEADS

A neighbor of the "Holt" family reported to the Brooklyn Bureau of Charities that they were in dire need. A visitor found that the neighbor's statement was not in the least exaggerated, and that "Mrs. Holt" and her five children were indeed in need of help. Although a skilled mechanic, the father had been out of work for several months, and his wife could do nothing to take his place as breadwinner, because the children required a great deal of care and her health was poor.

The oldest child is a girl of 14 and the youngest a baby less than 2. They are undernourished, and although the bureau has taken care of their immediate needs an extended program of health-building and general rehabilitation must be carried out in order to make them a normal, happy family once more. In order to care for them properly the bureau requires a fund of \$525, and an appeal is made for contributions toward this amount, which may be sent to its office at 285 Schermerhorn Street, Brooklyn, marked "for 854T."

BODY PRESERVED BY PEAT

A coroner's jury at Mullaghcroy County, Westmeath, Ireland, was enabled to return a precise verdict in regard to the body of a woman, at least half a century after her death, on account of the remarkable qualities of peat as a preservative. The body was found by a turf cutter two feet beneath the surface of the Mullaghcroy peat bog. So remarkable was its state of preservation, even to the features and the two long plaits of auburn hair, that the coroner, who is also a physician, said that she had been dead for at least half a century.

A woman of Mullaghcroy, aged 90, who had lived there all her life and other aged witnesses testified that they did not recall any case of a missing woman. The verdict recorded by the coroner was that "the female person, aged from 20 to 30 years, found in Mullaghcroy bog, met her death over fifty years ago, probably from wounds inflicted by a knife."

The body is being preserved by the undertaker of Mullaghcroy so that scientific specialists from Dublin may make a further examination.

USED FLY PAPER ON TIGERS

Francis Birtles, described by *Forward* of Calcutta as "the intrepid Australian explorer," recently reached Rangoon from the jungles of India and was interviewed by the correspondent of the *Forward* at that place.

He told a long story of his adventures extending from the hills of Persia to the jungles of India with many hairbreadth escapes, particularly from the Dacoits, who stole his blankets, although they left his extra automobile tires, so that he could go on, although almost perishing from the cold.

"But of all places," he added, "I find your jungles the pleasantest; they are so varied, beautiful and safe."

"Safe!" ejaculated the correspondent. "How about the tigers?"

"The tigers? Oh, I don't mind them. Coming through Burma I kept the tigers off with fly paper. Every night I spread a quantity of sheets around my camp and was never disturbed. The fly paper is an absolute protection against tigers. The reason is psychological. The tiger is an animal of great conscious dignity. He prowls about and challenges man until he comes to the fly paper. Then all his dignity goes and he slinks away. No dignified tiger would dare face a human being after squatting down upon a sticky fly paper."

The Yankee Whaler

One of the most striking headlands on the South African coast is the bluff of Natal. Its majestic position, standing boldly out from the mainland and rising straight up from the deep, blue ocean to a height of several hundred feet; the brilliant hues of the thousand-and-one varieties of tropical foliage which cover its steep sides from top to bottom; the clear sky above and the bright plumage of the birds flashing in the sun—all contribute to make the spot picturesque in the extreme. In the maze of the gigantic underwood on the bluff, at the time of which I am writing, leopards, tiger-cats, monkeys, serpents and other beasts and reptiles roamed at will, the precipitous sides and wild entanglement insuring protection from the attacks of the hunter. Within the last few years a road has been made up the bluff, and a lighthouse now crowns the summit. The inner or northern side of the bluff forms one side of the bay of Natal, while low sandhills inclose it on the north. The northern coast is irregular, and a sandhill projecting far into the bay almost cuts it into two parts, so forming a double harbor. From this point the harbor-bar stretches across, and the water being there very shallow, vessels of large size are prevented from passing into the inner harbor. Fortunately, however, the bluff protects them on the south, and except when north or east winds are blowing, a tolerably good anchorage is obtainable. On account of the impossibility of emigrant ships sailing over the bar, the early emigrants were transported from the ships to the beach in the inner harbor in large surfboats, and frequently had to be carried through the surf to the shore by Kaffirs.

In the sandhill that divides the bay there stands a lookout and the port captain or harbor-master's house, and about two miles up the south shore is situated the town of Durban, the only road to which, at the date of this story, was through the bushpath.

Early in the afternoon of one of the hottest days of the summer of 185—, the thermometer registering something like one hundred and ten degrees in the shade, the bay as calm as glass, and the beach quite deserted, the men in the lookout were surprised to see a long, rakish schooner sail around the bluff and drop anchor in the outer bay. No sooner had she breeched to than a whaleboat was lowered and put off from her side. The harbor-master hurried down, followed by half a dozen men, to the beach, and before the boat had reached the shore a small crowd of white men and Kaffirs had gathered around. As the boat ran on to the shingle, a tall, sallow man, whose bony frame, sharp eyes and features proclaimed him an American before he spoke, jumped ashore, and asked in a sharp, nasal tone: "Who's boss (chief personage) here?"

"I am the Port Captain," said that functionary, stepping forward. "Do you want me?"

"Waal, yes, I do—some. I'm cap'n of the Southern Cross schooner; thar she is. She's sprung a bad leak, and I want to beach her here and examine her timbers. My lads is a'most done up with pumpin'. She's fillin' most awfully quick, and I want some men to come off and take

a hand at the pumps. My crew can't keep on much longer, I guess."

"Where are you from, and where bound, captain?" asked the harbor-master.

"I've bin cruisin' after whales, and thar's a pile of ile aboard. But, sir, if we stop palav'ring I shan't git my ship beached. What men can you git me, now, quick?"

"There's plenty of Kaffirs about," said the harbor-master; "but you must get permission before you can take any of them off to your ship."

"Permission?" echoed the stranger; "waal, I never! Who's got charge of this lot? Who do they belong to?"

"They don't belong to anybody. This is a British colony, captain. But you must get leave to take 'em aboard, or else you can't have 'em," replied the harbor-master, emphatically.

"Who'll give me permission; you?" asked the captain. "No, I can't; you must go and get a magistrate's order."

"Whar's he to be found? Jest show me the way. Look sharp, boss, 'cos I'm in a mortal hurry, you know."

The harbor-master turned away, saying: "Up in Durban, and—"

"How fur's that?" broke in the Yankee.

"A good two miles through the bushpath. You'll have to get a horse."

"Whar'll I git one?" asked the captain.

At this moment Mr. McKay, the Government land agent, who, full of officious curiosity, had come down from the Custom-House, pushed through the crowd, and said: "I'll lend you a horse, captain. Just come this way."

"You're very obligin', sir," said the captain, turning and following the agent. "I'll accept your offer, and feel honored."

In a few minutes the horse was produced, and a negro engaged to run ahead and show the way. As the captain mounted the horse, he turned to the harbor-master and said: "You'll be able to find boats enough to take fifty niggers off at once, eh?"

"Oh, yes; we can do that."

"Waal, now," said the stranger, as a parting observation, "ain't it a plaguey shame that a man can't save his ship without all this palaver? Here's the Southern Cross, as smart a schooner as ever sailed under the Stars and Stripes, a-makin' water like mad, and I've got to go through all this here performance before I ken git a few darned niggers to pump." And away he rode toward Durban.

The magistrate not only gave the American captain the necessary order, but opened a bottle of wine, and, drinking to his success, promised any further assistance that might lie in his power, and in two hours after leaving the harbor the stranger was halfway back again.

During his absence all had been bustle at the harbor. More Kaffirs had come down in the hope of being hired, and great was the amount of speculation as to the terms likely to be offered. These Natal Kaffirs are runaway Zulus, who, having once deserted, are barred returning to Zululand under penalty of death. They are both brave and intelligent, and are a much finer set of men than the negroes of the West Coast. From the look-out the crew of the schooner could be seen pumping incessantly, a continuous stream

pouring from her side, and and Mr. McKay, whose proffer of the horse was instigated more by the hope of profit than by disinterested kindness, for he was the owner of the surfboats, was waiting with great impatience for the stranger's return, and calculating the amount he would realize by the business.

Sooner than could have been expected, the captain came riding up at a rattling pace, and, jumping from the horse, said: "Here's the permission, boss, all correct and complete. And now how many niggers ken I hev?"

"Just as many as you like," said the harbor-master; "there they are waiting to be hired."

"Now, sir, tell me—what time in the morning ken I git over the bar? I draw ten feet of water."

"Tide flows at six o'clock, and you could come over by eight, I should say," responded the harbor-master.

"Good. Waal, now, you boys, I'll give you seven and sixpence apiece to come and take turns all night. There's a powerful lot o' water in the hold by this time, and you'll hev to work, I tell you."

Several voices accepted the terms, and the harbor-master asked how many he would engage.

"Just you stand in a row, boys, and I'll pick out the likely ones. Be smart; the sun'll be down before we git aboard, if you don't be slick."

The Kaffirs were soon in line. The captain walked up and down surveying them, and carefully picking out the biggest and strongest, until he had selected about sixty.

"I will come off to you in the morning, captain, and bring you a pilot," said the harbor master.

"Waal, now, that's friendly of you, boss. Really, if you would, I should take it kindly," responded the Yankee.

"I will," said the harbor-master; "I'll come off when the tide makes."

"Thank you, sir," said the captain, as he stepped into the whaleboat; "you won't forget to come?"

"Certainly not," replied the harbor-master. "Good-night."

"Good-night," said the stranger, with a grim smile, waving his hand as the boat pulled away.

Before the sun had risen on the following morning the port captain, Mr. McKay, and the lookout men were already assembled on the sand-point; and the first flush of daylight came rapidly spreading over land and sea they strained their eyes across the bay, eager to catch an early glimpse of the schooner whose arrival and condition had caused such unusual excitement the day before. Well might they start and stare in speechless astonishment. There was the bay all right and there was the blue bluff beyond it, but nothing else. No Southern Cross! No ship at all! Nothing to mark where she had lain the previous night! What could it mean? Could she have foundered with all hands? No; for there was not depth of water sufficient to cover her masts if she had. Could she have broken away and gone ashore? Impossible; for the wind, a mere capful, was off the land.

"She's gone!" was the first exclamation which broke the silence—"clean gone!"

"What can it mean?" asked Mr. McKay.

"Mean?" said the harbor-master; "mean? That we're all born fools; that's what it means."

"Why, how?" gasped the bewildered agent.

"How?" responded the harbor-master. "Why was he so particular about the sort of Kaffirs he engaged? Wouldn't any kind of Kaffirs do for working pumps? Of course they would. I can see it all now. She was no whaler; she had sprung no leak. She was a Yankee slaver, that's what she was; and we ought all to be shot for not seeing it before."

"But we saw them pumping the water out of her," said the agent, after a pause.

"Of course you did. But you didn't see the other side of her, did you, Mr. McKay?"

"Well, no," responded the agent.

"No; but if you had, you'd have seen 'em pumping the water in! That's what it was, Mr. McKay; the rascals were pumping it in on the starboard side and out again on the port; don't you see?"

"Yes, I see now," sighed the agent.

"Sixty niggers kidnaped before our very eyes!" continued the harbor-master. "A pretty thing, upon my word!"

"Best pardon," said one of the men; "p'raps she's in sight now, sir—if we was to pull off in the boat around the bluff head, sir."

"What's the good of that?" growled the harbor-master.

"O'ny p'raps we might see what course she was a-takin'; and in case the admiral was to come around, we could say which way she was a-goin', sir."

"Oh, she's out o' sight by this time, never fear," said the harbor-master. "But man the boat, and we'll see."

Away went the men to get the boat out, and away went the harbor-master and Mr. McKay after them down to the beach.

"No wonder he was so particular, the rascal! Why, every one of those Kaffirs will fetch \$500 in America. He's done a very fair day's work, and no mistake, Mr. McKay."

"Yes; and never paid me for the hire of my boat," dolefully responded the agent; "and I lent the scoundrel my horse, too!"

"Well, it's no use now. But where our senses were, Mr. McKay, to be outwitted like that, I can't think. I shall hear of this again. If only the admiral would cruise around here, we might catch 'em now; but we shan't see him for months, maybe. It's about the deepest move that ever I heard of."

By this time the boat was out and manned, and a hearty pull took them to the bluff head in half an hour; but no sign of the slaver was to be seen.

The next day a southern-bound brig dropped anchor in the outer bay and sent ashore for some fresh meat. The harbor-master went off to her, and gave the captain a letter to deliver to the admiral if he fell in with him, or to leave at the cape if he did not. Although the letter reached the admiral within a week, and he put off to sea on the chance of falling in with some news of the Southern Cross, no more was ever heard of that Yankee whaler.

BRIEF BUT POINTED

NEW CHOCK DEVICE STOPS AUTO INSTANTLY, JERSEY MAKER SAYS

A device which the inventor holds will save human life by stopping an automobile almost instantly has been perfected and a patent for it has been sought by Pasquale Strano of 259 Elizabeth Avenue, Elizabeth, N. J.

The mechanism, the inventor says, can be applied to any car. It stops the vehicle, he declares, by dropping under the rear wheels a chock, or shoe, the sole of which is fitted with a cork pad to prevent skidding. The shoes, which weigh about eight pounds, are fastened on a pair of rocker arms integral with the chassis. They are wedge shaped, and the points pass under the wheels. The wheels cannot pass over the chocks, Strano asserts, because the top surfaces of the shoes are fitted with rollers on which the wheels revolve if power is applied before the chocks are pulled up.

NEW ARMY DRESS RULES

Army regulations were amended recently to authorize the wearing by officers of the white dress uniforms and a white mess jacket in the United States as well as in the tropics, when prescribed by the commanding officer.

Black trousers, black shoes and black sox will be worn with the white mess jacket in lieu of white trousers, shoes and socks, whenever prescribed by the commanding officer. The white uniforms, however, will not be worn at drill or on duty with enlisted men.

Heretofore the wearing of the white dress uniform and the white mess jacket by the officers in the tropics has been authorized. Prior to the World War at certain social functions of an official character the white dress uniform was prescribed for all officers.

The wearing of black trousers, black socks and black shoes with the mess jacket has been authorized in the past for officers in the Philippine Hawaiian and Panama Canal Departments, and for the forces in China and Porto Rico.

SAY CHINA'S FAMINE GROWS

A statement emphasizing the increasing distress in China, due, among other factors, to political turbulence of recent years, was issued recently by Dr. Sao-ke Alfred Sze through the China Famine Relief, 419 Fourth Avenue, which is now making a subscription drive for a fund to be distributed in China. Dr. Sze was formerly a Minister of the Peking Government and was recently appointed Minister to Washington by the Chinese Nationalist Government.

So serious is the distress, Dr. Sze says, and so apparent is the outlook for the coming Fall and Winter that the Nanking Government is making preparations to raise a large fund through customs surtaxes and other channels.

The method of relief now being employed by the American committee, namely, the offer of work to the suffering thousands in the reclamation of lands destroyed by frequent floods, is commended by Dr. Sze, who points out that "the eco-

nomic factors which are the basic causes of the distress among China's agricultural masses are becoming more clearly understood."

Picturing the plight of the famine victims, Dr. Sze says:

"They have been driven to almost desperate straits, some migrating to Manchuria and other near-by territory. Many homes have been completely broken up. Often, with food gone or nearly gone, it is impossible for the whole family to travel and so the men migrate, leaving their families behind. In desperation the children have been deserted, or, through death and disease, left orphans."

STORY OF A SOLDIER'S BRAVERY PERPETUATED FOR HIS REGIMENT

Of all the heroic deeds accomplished by Americans in winning the Medal of Honor, probably none stands a better chance of perpetuation than that performed by Private Louis Gedeon of the Nineteenth Infantry, who "defended his Captain, single-handed and alone, near Amia, Cebu, in the Philippine Islands, on Feb. 4, 1900." His bravery has been perpetuated in a painting which hangs from the walls of the commanding officer of the regiment, now stationed at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, and every new arrival is formally introduced to the picture at a ceremony during which the details of Gedeon's exploit are recited in full.

Captain E. D. Smith of Company G, the Nineteenth Infantry, with thirty-one men of his company, went on a scouting expedition to Fort Amia on Feb. 4, 1900, to try to capture Maxilom, the insurgent leader of the Island of Cebu, according to the official records. Leaving the town of Sogod that morning, Captain Smith and his detachment marched into the mountains over difficult trails and very rugged country. Late in the afternoon, after the detachment had covered about sixteen miles, Captain Smith noticed a group of nipa houses on a hill about a mile away.

Halting his detachment, Captain Smith proceeded with Private Gedeon to inspect the houses with a view toward quartering his men there that night. When they were within two or three hundred yards of the houses insurgents concealed in the bushes fired a volley at them. Captain Smith fell, mortally wounded. Private Gedeon returned the fire and held back the insurgents until relief arrived. Captain Smith died the next day.

Gedeon was rewarded with a Medal of Honor with the following citation: "For most distinguished gallantry in action near Mount Amia, Cebu, P. I., on Feb. 4, 1900, in defending, single-handed and alone, his Captain, who had been mortally wounded, against an overwhelming force of the enemy."

The painting commemorating the heroic act of Gedeon was made by Sidney H. Reisenberg for Harper's Weekly and was afterward presented to the regiment. Gedeon, who originally came from Pittsburgh, is now in the Soldiers' Home, Washington, D. C., having retired from the army on April 5, 1923.

CURRENT NEWS

GERMAN TOWN TO SPRINKLE STREETS WITH SODA WATER

The City Council of Altheide, Germany, has voted to use soda water exclusively for street cleaning purposes.

Henceforth, under the new measure, soda fountains will be hauled through the streets and plazas with sprinkler attachments.

Altheide's mineral springs spout 2,000,000 quarts of soda water every day and most of it is wasted. Ordinary water is expensive and it was decided that soda fountains could do the work more efficiently at lower cost.

VIENNESE FIND ROMAN RUINS

Ruins of what is believed to have been a Roman city were discovered by workmen excavating in front of the Tiz Hotel here recently. Several elaborate tombs containing embalmed human remains, jewels, floral wreaths, food and other utensils, all in an extraordinarily good state of preservation, were unearthed.

Professor Bettinger, noted Viennese archaeologist, who was summoned to the scene, confessed himself to be utterly bewildered by the perfect condition of two of the skeletons, which he declared were those of men who lived before Christ's appearance on earth.

The work of excavation was suspended so that the relics could be removed to a museum and studied further.

THE OPEN SEASON FOR TREASURES

This is the season when the annual Summer search for treasure trove is on. From Montauk to Grand Manan there is scarcely an island or headland that does not have its tradition of buried gold. If there were a grain of foundation for one out of one hundred of these mythical tales, Kidd's wealth would have been beyond computation.

When some one asked Moll Pitcher, the fortuneteller of Lynn, to disclose the place where Pirate Kidd had secreted his loot, promising to give her half of what was recovered, the old witch answered, "Fool! If I knew, could I not have all myself?"

Half a century ago there was persistent search for buried gold at Eagle Cliff, near Bar Harbor, Me.

ONLY STEEL CARS SOON ON THE PENNSYLVANIA

With the close of the present year the wooden passenger cars will have disappeared from the tracks of the Pennsylvania Railroad System, having been superseded by the all-steel car first introduced twenty-two years ago. This will be made possible by the completion of orders for 629 steel cars placed earlier in the year, representing an expenditure of about \$15,000,000.

When in 1906, the Pennsylvania placed in service the first all-steel passenger coach to be operated by any railroad the new equipment was

made standard for the Pennsylvania and the construction of wooden cars was discontinued.

At the close of the present year the Pennsylvania's passenger equipment will be practically 100 percent steel, including 5,501 all-steel cars, representing an investment of about \$100,000,000.

The Pennsylvania Railroad was the first to adopt the air brake, one of the first to discontinue open platforms, substituting enclosed vestibules, and the first to equip a train with electric lights.

WHAT EARLY PEDDLERS SOLD

Country folk living in isolated farm houses along little traveled highways forty or fifty years ago were called upon almost daily by itinerant venders. While a few of the less cautious farmers found occasion for lamentations following such visitations, most of them were satisfied that they had secured their money's worth.

Interurban car lines, good roads and automobiles have since played havoc with lightning-rod agents, tin peddlers, sewing machine men, pins-and-needles men, and numerous others who once made livings from the farm trade. Now, the back-to-the-soilers step on the starter of a motor car and shop in town.

Late last century the road merchants sold great numbers of steel engravings to rural dwellers. Presently these were crowded out, relegated to dusty attics by gaudy "chromos."

Referring to girlhood days, an old lady of Rutland, Vt., recently commented: "I recall once seeing in the home of a relative at St. Johnsbury a garish substitution on the sitting-room wall where for years had hung a steel engraving of Landseer's famous painting, 'The Stag at Bay.'

"I found that it had been transferred to the comparative obscurity of an upstairs spare room, while in its place hung a pair of chromos that were quite the rage forty years or more ago. They were entitled 'Wide Awake' and 'Fast Asleep,' and I am sure a good many elderly persons will remember them.

"This reminds me that it was somewhere in the late eighties or early nineties that the crayon enlargement fad swept over New England like an epidemic. It was the agent's business to find out who the idol of the house was, and by hook or crook secure a photograph.

"Once that was accomplished he would take it to crayon artist and have a life-size enlargement of head and bust made. Sometimes it would turn out to be a faithful copy of the photograph. When the agent had embellished it with a gilded frame he was ready for the grand denouement.

"He would call at the home of the victim, display his surprise crayon enlargement and leave it 'on approval' adorning the front parlor wall.

"Very few of the country folk could resist the charms of the 'speaking likeness' of the dear one, as the suave agent would enthusiastically refer to it, so nine times out of ten a sale was made. Those crayon portraits are still found today in some old-fashioned homes, but most of them were years ago transferred to attics."

Fame and Fortune Weekly

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